

WOM

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TATIANA GORILOVSKY
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TOMEKA REID
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AND SO MUCH MORE!



International
Women's Day



COVER PHOTO: TOMIEKA REID COURTESY OF MICHAEL JACKSON

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Welcome to our International Women's Day March 2026 edition.

'International Women's Day (IWD), celebrated annually on March 8, is a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women. The day also marks a call to action for advancing gender equality.

IWD has been around for well over a century, with the first IWD marked in 1911.

In 2026, IWD marks an extraordinary milestone: 115 years of collective action, advocacy, and progress toward gender equality. For more than a century, IWD has helped drive transformative change. Each generation has built on the courage of those before it, pushing boundaries and redefining what is possible.'

This is an interactive magazine, so please do click away to visit websites, buy music, watch videos etc, or you can download as a pdf.

Please take your time. Take a moment away from your phone and enjoy the photography on a larger screen. Please share the incredible artists you see here with your communities. Together we can support each other, we can inspire each other, and we can enjoy art, in all forms, together.

PHOTO OF ANA CARLA MAZA BY TATIANA GORILOVSKY



TOMEKA REID

PHOTO BY CRISTINA MARX

TOMEKA REID

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE JOY

BY FIONA ROSS

Cellist and composer Tomeka Reid skips in public. She frolics. In public. This is arguably my favourite thing about this incredible artist. Joy is important to Tomeka. Not just her own joy, but the joy of others. In her latest album *dance! skip! hop!* she explores the joy of her family and the legacy she is part of. Her great grandmother Francis Elizabeth Bean, her grandmother Estelle, and her great Aunt Cece are at the forefront of this stunning album.

Why do you skip?

I don't know, I guess basic stuff. Sunshine? Particularly in this moment that we are all living through, it's hard to find those moments of joy. You could go into a dark, dark place because how do we repair anything? How do we get out of this? It's happening all over the world and it's just so much. I'm so grateful to have music. I feel that if maybe people played instruments, they could preoccupy themselves with something else. I'm really grateful that I have music and that sound can be healing to myself and to the people that are listening to it. I have that practice. I feel like that's what people need. People need ritual, they need practice... some people find it in organised religion or hating people... I don't know. But I'm glad that I have music. It's a hard path, a fun path, but it keeps me grounded and it gives me goals and gives me discipline and gives me community. And I think that's what people are lacking and that's why we are, I think, in this situation. We don't know how to listen. Playing improvised music is all about listening and communicating. It's not that I'm perfect at it, but at least it's a part of my practice to do those kinds of

things. I also got married, in the pandemic, and that brings me joy to know that I have someone to go through these challenging moments with. So, I feel super blessed about that.

During the pandemic Tomeka became the primary caregiver for her grandmother, which although obviously challenging for many reasons, allowed her the space to really reflect and consider the importance of family and legacy.

It was one of the hardest things I've ever done in my life. But at the same time, looking back on it, I feel grateful for that experience. I'm grateful that I was able to be with her for the last few years of her life because I didn't grow up with her. I had these photos and that is part of my new record, having these photos of this part of my family. I think they're amazing images. On my second record (3+3), I have a picture of my biological father and his twin brother and my grandmother. I just don't remember him, but for me, it was a joyous moment in his life. I don't know what he had been doing and so that was part of it - who were you when you were 12? What were you thinking about before the world got to you and you made all these decisions that you made?

dance! skip! hop! Finding the joy

I went to my great grandmother's house and it's like a living museum with all these pictures. I didn't grow up with my biological father and so I never thought I would know him or his family. These were just amazing and I was thinking how do these features



PHOTO BY MICHAEL JACKSON



Tomeka, Aunt Cece
and Grandma

live on? How do I share these images? Also we don't see, I haven't seen, many images of black people in the West - Wyoming - you don't see those types of images. So that's partly why I did that with the second record. And then with this one, I thought these images were so charming and I want them to live on for other people. I think they're so beautiful. I just wanted people to see these photos, these pictures of joy. I just love the images of her, they just looked joyful and spunky and human. I often feel, oftentimes, you don't see or at least I haven't seen a lot of black images from that time period with that kind of energy and joy. She's sassy and she's just having fun and I wanted to put that on there and on the inner record.

Tomeka has taken the world by storm with her beautifully authentic and highly versatile artistry and has quickly emerged

as an artist finally bringing the cello to the forefront of jazz and the improvised music scene. With her quartet, Tomeka has released four critically acclaimed albums, Tomeka Reid Quartet (2015) Old New (2019) 3+3 (2024) and now her latest album dance, skip, hop! (2026). In this new album, Tomeka – as always – shows us that the cello can do so much more than we think it can, especially in jazz where a cello is relatively uncommon.

A lot of the time when you're playing the cello, it's long and sustained but for this record, I wanted to invoke some kind of joy and show that the cello can also dance.

It is an awesome instrument and it's very versatile. It can function like a bass, it can function like a horn. It can be a soloist in the ensemble or comp like a chordal instrument. It's also cool in conjunction

with the double bass. That's a really cool sound. But it can also just be a different flavour of energy - it's super versatile. What is especially unique about the cello, is the lack of a huge portfolio of legacy jazz cellists. This allows more space for artists to make it their own – which Tomeka absolutely does and importantly encourages others to do the same.

Tomeka launched the Chicago Jazz String Summit in 2017 to 'encourage recognition, support and build an audience for outstanding improvising and experimental string players -- past, present and future'. An inspirational community of string players are involved each year and have included Regina Carter, Janel Leppin, Olula Negre, Terry Jenoure, Zara Zaharieva, Akua Dixon and Brandee Younger.

I want the cello to be part of the conversation. I mean, there are a lot of great cellists out there. But I think some of the festivals and programmers need to listen. I have my annual string festival, and I invite innovative string players every year

to Chicago to play and what's cool about that is everyone is doing something really different. We don't have that burden of huge lineage so everyone really brings their own unique sound to this music, to jazz and improvised music, which I think is really awesome.

As well as her playing the cello, Tomeka wrote all five compositions for dance! skip! hop! and brings the fantastic Jason Roebke (bass, cassette) Mary Halvorson (guitar) and Tomas Fujiwara (drums) with her for the quartet. The five tracks dance! skip! hop!, a(ways) For CC and CeCe, Oo long!, Under the Aurora Sky and Silver Spring Fig Tree beautifully demonstrate the depth of Tomeka's emotional connection to not only her cello but the community she is part of. The unity and freedom is significant.

A serious tea drinker, Oo long! is named after a restaurant she visited when she was an artist-in-residence in Moers. 'Besides the handmade soba they had the most delicious oolong tea! I still crave it sometimes, so this song is named after that'. a(ways) For



Aunt Cece and Grandma

CC and CeCe, is dedicated to Clarence James, who had a huge influence on Tomeka as a supporter of the Chicago music scene and to Great Aunt Cece, 'Aunt Cece was by my side every step of the way. She really loved her big sister, who would have turned 100 this year'. Her husband, David, titled Under the Aurora Sky and the final track, Silver Spring Fig Tree, is inspired by Steve Feigenbaum of Cuneiform Records and the city where Tomeka first started playing cello.

dance! skip! hop! is out now!



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COVER TO BUY**

TOMEKA [LINKS CLICK](#)

PHOTO BY ZIGA KORITNIK





PHOTO BY ZIGA KORITNIK

THE PULSE OF THE LOW-END

A CONVERSATION WITH AUS TEBZA

BY SHIREEN FISHER

In the vibrant South African music scene, few artists command as much multi-dimensional respect as Aus Tebza. Known as the "Queen of Bass," Tebogo Sedumedi has carved out a distinct identity that defies the traditional boundaries of jazz, hip-hop, and traditional African rhythms.

She is a rare phenomenon in the industry: a formidable bassist who anchors the groove with surgical precision while simultaneously delivering lead vocals that carry the weight of ancestral history and modern social commentary. From her decade-long tenure alongside the legendary HHP to her role as a visionary Music Director and solo artist, Aus Tebza's journey is one of intentionality, spiritual depth, and an unwavering commitment to authenticity.

In this exclusive Q&A for Women in Jazz Media, Shireen Fisher dives deep into the "6/8 heartbeat" of her sound, the mental gymnastics of playing and singing, and the powerful philosophy of "purpose over algorithms" that defines her creative output.

SF: For those meeting you for the first time through Women in Jazz Media, could you share the significance of your name and the identity you've built around it in the South African music scene?

TS: Well, my full name is Tebogo and in short it's Tebza, but my colleagues decided that they needed to add something, to my name to give it more meat, to give it more depth, you know, as they were saying, they want to respect me even when they call my

name. So they decided to add the "Aus" part, which actually derives from "Ausi", you know, the Afrikaans word "Aus", which means sister. So, that's how the name Aus Tebza came about. It has stuck and I do believe that it does have that respect essence to it.

SF: You grew up in a quiet, church-loving home without any professional musicians. Looking back, what was that "lightning bolt" moment where you realised you weren't just a fan of music, but that you were actually born to create it?

TS: *I've always had a song, a melody, a rhythm, a beat in my body, in my bones. I don't have any particular moment where I realized that this is my calling. It has always been with me. I've always known that music is how I breathe. Music is how I express myself. So, it is something that I've always believed, that music I was born with it. It's nothing that I picked up from the outside. It's something that I've always had, even with the stories that my parents would tell me that I would literally run to the Super Bowl in Sun City when I was a toddler because both my parents worked there. They say I would just burst into the Super Bowl and get on stage when people were rehearsing. And I'm talking about international acts, which is one of the amazing stories that I got to hear from my parents. And it became a confirmation of what I'm saying, that it's something that has always been with me and that would always come out as an expression whenever I'm around music.*

SF: Most instrumentalists pick up their craft as a first choice, but you stepped into the role of a bassist out of necessity for a band. When did that "instrument of convenience" transform into your primary voice and passion?

TS: *I knew early on, you know, in my career that singing was not enough for me. I knew it, you know, and I experienced that when I started writing my own music, where it started frustrating me that I couldn't translate that into music, you know, into an actual song with a structure and chord progressions and everything that goes with composing a song, right? And I knew that I needed to pick up an instrument, you know, to afford me the ability to express myself, you know, even deeper, you know, and showcase what I am feeling inside of me. So the minute I picked it up and I realized that it actually speaks even, you know, in more depth, you know, it's even, it's bigger, its voice is bigger than my voice. And people are drawn to that. I saw the transformation. I saw that this is actually going to help me get the message across. And that's how everything started, you know, falling into place.*

SF: It is rare to find an artist who commands the low-end of a bass guitar while delivering such emotive lead vocals. How do you physically and mentally coordinate the two? Do they ever "fight" for your attention during a live performance?

TS: *Oh, if only people knew how much of a brain exercise it is, you know, to play bass and sing at the same time. Because remember, with the bass instrument, the placing of notes is different from when you're playing like a chorded instrument, like guitars or piano. Sometimes the notes are placed off the beat, not on the beat. And now when you have to sing, you have to sometimes sing on the beat or off the beat. So it's almost not even almost - your*

brain has to split - it has to separate and be able to handle the instrument, which is the base, and handle the voice at the same time, they have to come together and be one. They have now to communicate the same message, but they have different ways of understanding the message. But at the end of the day it has to come together and reflect on that. So, your brain has to be sharp. Your mental state has to be free. You know, you can't have a cluttered mind, because you are literally doing not only two things, you are playing bass, you are singing, but also you are part of the band. So, it becomes three things, and it even becomes even a little harder when I am the music director, because now I have to split it into four, not forgetting considering the audience. You have to be able to have great coordination skills, so that you can take all of them and put them in one pot to create this one masterpiece. So, yeah, that's what it is.

SF: Let's talk about the 6/8 Heartbeat. Your music is deeply rooted in traditional African rhythmic patterns. Why is it important for you to incorporate these ancient "rhythmic fabrics" into a modern jazz context?

TS: *I believe music is a reflection of who we are. When you know where you come from, when you know where you are and understand where you're going, it makes it easy for you to embrace that bring it with you - even into your present and into the future. I think for me, as an African woman, it's important that I tell my story in a way that I understand, in a way that I know I'll be true to the craft and I'll be true to my true identity. I understand that I also have to recognise where we are. I have to bring that into, you know, the the current movement, the current culture, where now the smooth and modern jazz context comes in, where I'm taking this raw, six, eight as a beat, and I'm able to smoothen it, put elements that make it seem like it was created in a lab somewhere in New York.*

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PHOTO BY UNDEFINED DIMENSIONS



And I think that is what carries the beauty of our music, because it can translate and transfer into anything that we make it to be.

SF: As a Music Director, you are often the "captain of the ship" for other artists. How does your perspective change when you move from being a collaborator for others to being the visionary of your own solo projects?

TS: *I wear so many hats in the music industry that I appreciate the fact that I can shapeshift, I can be a music director, I can be a recording artist, I can be a collaborator, I can be a board member. I have projects in which I uplift women, especially young women in the music industry. There's so many things that I learn by doing so. But more than anything, it teaches me the art of collaboration, the art of listening, the art of execution, the art of leadership, you know, that I get to showcase in every aspect of my work, where I come in and, you know, I become what that role needs me to be. And I am proud of myself that I get to explore and be, you know, those different elements, you know, that also teaches me the art and the business behind the music.*

SF: You are known for being very intentional, often leaving years between your releases like Make a Difference and Motheo. In a world that demands "instant content," why is it vital for you to let your projects breathe and age before sharing them?

TS: *Well, you know, art is not a competition. Art is not about reaching, you know, sales targets. It's not about that. It's about expression. It's about confirmation. It's about your spirit agreeing to what you are releasing or what you're working on. The intention behind my work has everything to do with understanding who I am and understanding that I release music because there is something that I*

need, you know, to communicate. It's not about, you know, trying to reach milestones. I'm not trying to have 10 albums in 10 years. That's not what it is. It's about understanding that there is a need for this body of work at that particular moment. It's understanding where I am as an artist. You know, it's understanding that music is a communication of, you know, of the heart, of the spirit.

So everything has to come from a spirit, you know, understanding, of knowing that you release because you are sent, you release because you are addressing an issue, you release because you are creating a platform for others to even shine.

You know, you look at some of the music in Motheo. There's a song called Re Tshabele Kae, it addresses gender-based violence, and then, a song like Le Phirimile, it addresses the dilapidating family structures not only in our society, but globally. So, those are very important songs that I believe that they needed to be released when Motheo was released. It's more to do with understanding your purpose, you know, understanding what your mandate is. It's not about chasing, you know, numbers. It's not about chasing what the algorithm says and everything else that goes with it. It's purpose.

SF: You've mentioned that some songs you record now were actually written over 20 years ago. What is it like to "collaborate" with your younger self? Do those melodies take on a different meaning now that you have more life experience?

TS: *Oh, wow! I never thought of this, hey. Thank you for asking such a beautiful question. It was truly inspiring. I think for me it affirmed me, you know, that you've been on the right track. You know, the ability to take a song that I used to sing 20 years ago and record it in my current time. It's just incredible because now it carries*

a certain energy, a certain history and a certain understanding. Bringing it now into a moment, where we need to hear the words now more than ever, the songs are the ones that I actually mentioned before, Re Tshabele Kae - which means “Where should we run to?” - it addresses the gender-based violence that we're experiencing in high volumes in our country. And then you take a song like Le Phirimile, which addresses the dilapidating family structures that we find ourselves in. That's the power of writing good music. It's also a power of appreciating the ones that wrote the music when I was younger. That I trusted them then and everywhere we are - doesn't matter if it was in the past, the present or the future - that's what it is.

SF: You have a formidable history as a collaborator, having spent over a decade anchoring the groove for the legendary HHP, and lending your virtuosity to icons like Simphiwe Dana, Wouter Kellerman, and Gloria Bosman. More recently, you took Setswana music to a global stage with the Spanish group Merlettes. Looking at this vast spectrum - from Motswako hip-hop to international fusions - how have these diverse "musical languages" shaped your DNA as a bandleader, and is there one specific "secret" or lesson learned from these giants that still dictates how you command a stage today?

TS: It's quite a spread of different layers of textures I serve. So many palettes and I believe this is what makes me the kind of artist I am. I'm able to adapt, I'm able to learn, I'm able to unlearn, I'm able to relearn, I'm able to grow, I'm able to listen, I'm able to serve, I'm able to lead, I'm able to listen and you know, just take instruction. I'm able to move, I'm able to flow. Because if you are able to do that, then you will be able to understand different types of people. You'll be able to function anywhere you find yourself and I think this has what sustained me and is

still sustaining me as a working musician. Either I am wearing the captain's hat or I am a collaborator or I am releasing my own music. I'm still serving. And when you understand that - you know this art, it's not one-dimensional - I think also you position yourself in a way that you become a winner. You become a success story of being able to serve your craft the best way possible.

SF: You've seen your music move people who don't understand your language. What do you believe is the "universal truth" within your basslines that allows them to speak to a global audience?

TS: Authenticity, your truth, your honesty, when you bear your soul on the stage, in the studio when you're recording, when you're performing and you allow people to see you and you are able to be naked and express yourself in a way that they will understand where this song comes from - I think it just brings forth the spirit behind, you know, the creation. Because at the end of the day, music is spiritual. Music is a wave. It's a flow. So, if you're honest and you are willing to open yourself up, people are able to relate and reflect and not base their experience on understanding a language. It's more about connecting spiritually where somebody says, “All I know is, I felt good. All I know is that I felt forgiveness, I felt love.” And that's what we are spreading, people. To connect with who they are, so that they experience themselves also in a new way.

SF: You've spoken about carrying other women with you on this journey. What is the one piece of advice you'd give to a young girl who sees you on stage and realises that she, too, can command the "big strings" in a jazz band?

TS: This is what I always say to women, especially younger ones that are emerging and are looking up to me and what I do. I tell them that they need to affirm

themselves. Affirm yourself. Don't wait for somebody to come and tell you're great. Believe you are great. Believe that what you're doing is what you are meant to do. And that will guide you because then you don't have to wait for anybody to come and say, “Oh, no, you're not doing it right. Oh, no, you need to do it this way.” Because with the women that I've interacted with through the years, the issue has always been confidence. The issue has always been trust. You know, there's a lot of work that needs to be done there for women to trust themselves and not look at themselves through the lens of their male counterparts. Because that's where I believe we lose it. When you're looking at a male musician and thinking, “Oh, he's doing it this way. I must do it better.” No, no, no! You do it your way. You do it the best way that you can do it. You know, because at the end of the day, this should not be a competition. It's not about who's going to reach the finish line first. It's about fulfilling your purpose. So for me, I say to women, just be sure, validate yourself, you are enough, and you belong there.

SF: If your last single Mmangwane is the bridge between your past work and your future, where is that bridge taking us next? What does the "future sound" of Aus Tezba feel like?

TS: There's a song actually I released called Moya and it means spirit. It's actually a prayer. It's one of the songs that really I released to soothe my spirit, and to settle my own energy. I hope that it's doing the same for people that have heard the song. But that's the bridge for me. That's what's going to usher us into the album that I'm working on. I'm not sure when I'll be done. I'm not sure when I'll be



PHOTO BY UNDEFINED DIMENSIONS

releasing the first single, but I believe it will be before the end of the year. I'm so excited about it and I'm looking forward to connecting with people in that space of me being a recording bass player and singer.

AUS TEZBA LINKS CLICK HERE

SHIREEN FISHER LINKS CLICK HERE



PHOTO BY UNDEFINED DIMENSIONS

TINA CARR

PHOTO BY TATIANA GORILOVSKY



TINA CARR BRINGS US THE MOON

Tina Carr's new album *Moon Over Mildmay* is something to behold. She transforms eleven songs into stunning masterpieces filled with such depth and beauty, it takes your breath away. When I first listened through the album, I was in tears. I was not prepared for the rawness, the intensity, the lightness, the darkness, the breathtaking arrangements. Tina draws you into her conversation and makes you feel you are there with her, sharing her joy and her pain, with an intimacy that is strangely familiar yet new and you question how she can possibly be described as 'a relative newcomer'. This music has clearly always been part of her life, her very being and this album makes you feel she has always been part of our lives too.

If I describe myself as a late starter, there's something that doesn't quite fit there because I don't feel like a late starter because I started in childhood. I would describe myself as somebody who has returned to something that was very precious. I think if you say things like 'a late starter' or 'a newcomer', it puts up an immediate barrier in people's minds and puts you in a little box. I don't want to be in that box. I just want to be a woman coming into this situation, doing something I love and being taken at face value.

Growing up in a musical environment, Jazz has always been part of Tina's life.

It was the first thing I ever heard. My grandfather had a cafe in the East End of London in Whitechapel and it was a meeting place for people. He was a boxing promoter, so there were lots of sports people

and some musical people. My father's family were musical and every single one of them played or sang something. So, from childhood I would spend time in the cafe hearing what they were doing and I was listening to music since the moment I could hear. And the music they were playing at the time was American jazz, swing, blues, and they did it with a good heart. It wasn't academic. It wasn't studied - we're just going to have a good time.

Guided by music throughout her life, singing has always been part of Tina's very being. She did not study music and had not considered it as a career until she realised after many years in one job, she needed to make a change.

I was listening to music and the people I was listening to just made me want to make music. That's what I wanted to do. I was brought up listening to Carmen McCrae, Billie etc., but I started listening to people I didn't know, new people such as Zara McFarlane and Lianne La Havas when they were just starting out and they have wonderful voices and I loved what they were doing. And part of me would think I love this, but my God, where do I fit into anything like this?

Thankfully, Tina feels she has found her place now with this new album.

I do, yes, because I mean every single word of it and you can't do more than that.

Moon Over Mildmay has 11 beautiful and truly inspired arrangements of songs including 'I Didn't Know What Time It

PHOTO BY DAVE HAMBLETT

*'I shall not sing a May song.
A May song should be gay.
I'll wait until November
And sing a song of gray.'*



Was', 'Duke Ellington's Sound of Love' but also some lesser known material such as 'A Flower is a Lovesome Thing' and 'Make our Garden Grow' Tina completely embodies these songs and makes them feel entirely her own. The songs feel new but bring a feeling that these versions have always been in your heart. 'The Crazy Woman' adapted from a poem by American poet Gwendolyn Brooks, speaks to defiantly singing whatever she pleases, irrelevant of societal expectations or consequences.

The songs chose me, they really did. I don't set out to find a bunch of songs to fit a theme. I do not do that. I'm listening and noting songs down all the time - I want to do this one, I want to explore that one, maybe that one might be nice - so I'm constantly listening, making notes and

thinking. And then when I have time, I sit down and try something out. So, what I have put together for this album was strangely enough, a very random bunch of pieces of music that I loved. I love every tune that's on there. But I didn't know how well they'd fit together until we did the album. Then I discovered that they did fit together. They really did.

Tina not only surrounds herself with an incredible line up of musicians, but the intensity of the virtuosity and emotion they bring through each instrument, enhances the storytelling with breathtaking results. Matt Robinson (Piano) Tom Ollendorff (guitar) Oli Hayhurst (bass) Kieran McLeod (trombone) Sam Newbould (sax) Rod Oughton (drums) Áánú Sodipe (violin) Miguel Gorodi (trumpet)

I was lucky enough to work with some wonderful musicians. The main person I work with is the pianist/composer, Matt Robinson and I'm lucky that he plays with me. I've never had a musical education and so the musical education I've had has been over the last five years or so with Matt and I've learned a lot! He is a brilliant arranger and he is responsible for almost all of the arrangements on the album and they are stunning. Although these are standards, they're slightly unusual standards, and you can see from the album that I choose songs which have strong stories.

Tina has a clear passion and skill for sharing stories. She draws you in with an incredible intimacy and at times heartbreakingly beautiful raw vulnerability.

I'll come clean. I spent 21 years as a writer and so writing comes very naturally to me and speaking in someone else's voice comes naturally to me. Storytelling is about communication, and who doesn't want to get up on stage and communicate with everybody in front of them? Whether there's two people, 20 or 200, it doesn't matter how many you want to communicate with. I think that's what makes it all worthwhile.

Since AI has raised its head so much more, especially in the creative industry, there has been more desire, more need for 'real' and I've noticed that more and more people are using that word authenticity. To many artists, authenticity is never even a consideration because there is never an option to not be true and honest. Tina is one of those artists and the truths she shares with us is part of her unique artistry.

Somebody once said to me about a year ago, who do you sound like? Who do people say you sound like? Me! I hope I sound like me because I can't do it any other way. If you're going to be really good at what you do, you can only be honest. I think if you're not honest in the emotion and

the feeling that you put in, even if your voice falters, which mine does quite a lot, even if your voice falters, if you're putting through something that really is true, that you believe when you're saying it, it'll get across, won't it?

Tina's album is now out in the world, released March 6th, after a fantastic live launch in London, on Feb 18th.

I've made something that's artistically valuable, which I hope will give people pleasure. I hope they will be moved by it in whatever direction, not necessarily to tears, but I hope they will be touched by it. I hope they will recognise that it's coming from a very honest place. I mean, I cry every time I listen to it actually, but it's not a sad album. It's not a gloomy listen. There's joy in there and there's fun in there.



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[Interview by Fiona Ross](#)



PHOTOS BY TATIANA GORILOVSKY

BEHIND THE LENS

THE PHOTOGRAPHERS

BARKA FABIANOVA

ANA CARLA MAZA BY BARKA FABIANOVA



Barka Fabiánová is a Prague-based photographer specialising in concert photography. From small club shows to big stages, capturing atmosphere, emotions, and connection between the stage and audience. We spoke to Barka a few years ago and thought it was high time we caught up with her again!

When we last interviewed you four years ago, you told us that the jazz scene in Prague and Czech Republic was thriving – is it still thriving? We do hope so!

Yes, I believe it is still thriving, perhaps in a quieter and more organic way. The scene grows through collaborations, small venues and musicians who are not afraid to cross genres. Education at institutions such as Ježek Conservatory, HAMU and JAMU continue to shape strong new generations. And interesting things are not happening only in Prague. Cities like Brno, Trutnov, Hradec Králové and Slaný host vibrant festivals and concerts.

There are also intimate initiatives such as Prague Impro Room, led by pianist Kristýna Barta, where Czech artists meet internationally recognised musicians and musical art connects with visual art.

Representation is improving slowly. Women are still in the minority on many programmes, but their presence is becoming more visible.

Alongside photographing concerts, I have conducted interviews and written reviews. In the past year, I listened more than I photographed. In the future, I would like to be more visible not only as a photographer, but also as a publicist.

Are there any new musicians you have discovered recently that you would like to mention?

I constantly feel the need to discover

new voices. I find inspiration through social media, streaming platforms and recommendations from friends. As a member of the Czech Music Academy, I also participate in the voting for the And I Coca-Cola Music Awards in the Jazz and Folk categories, which keeps me closely connected to current releases.

One of my recent discoveries is Aynur, a Kurdish singer whose voice carries both fragility and immense strength. There is a quiet intensity in her performance that feels deeply rooted in history and identity.

Earlier, at the festival Maraton hudby in Brno, I discovered Mahsa Vahdat. Her singing is intimate and poetic, yet politically and culturally powerful. At the Respect Festival, I was deeply moved by Meral Polat, whose presence on stage combines warmth, rhythm and a strong connection to her heritage.

From the Czech scene, I have been captivated by the trio ConTRIOlogy, combining cimbalom, accordion and female voice in a very distinctive way, moving between contemporary composition and raw folklore. I would also mention the double bassist Klára Pudláková, whose playing is both subtle and decisive, with a clear artistic vision and strong compositional voice.

Can you tell us about some of your favourite local performances you have captured?

In Prague, I always appreciate photographing the Respect Festival for its strong international programme and attentive atmosphere. Last year, I also captured Mari Boine, one of my long-time favourite artists. That concert was very personal for me.

Outside Prague, I feel deeply connected to Folkové prázdniny in Nám šti nad Oslavou. It is one of my heart's festivals.



I photographed Fatoumata Diawara at the Rudolstadt Festival in Germany in 2018, a festival where global traditions meet contemporary voices. It was the perfect setting for her vibrant presence.

She is known for her refined live performances, visually and musically. Every detail feels intentional, from her striking costumes to her expressive gestures. On stage, she radiates confidence, warmth, and a deep connection to her roots.

I was especially moved by the Slovak project Dis Is Markéta, which beautifully blends folklore with jazz, alternative, and contemporary music, and Júlia Kozáková with her international Roma band.

I was also deeply moved by the project Orpheus and Eurydice, created by my friend, the Polish performer Ewa urakowska. It is an eclectic fusion of contemporary musical genres, blending indie ballads and spontaneous improvisation with live painting by Frances Sander, who is now over 80 years old. Watching her create visual art in real time alongside the music was profoundly inspiring. The performance offered a truly dual sensory experience, where sound and image developed together on stage.

Your work has been featured in many exhibitions – can you talk to us about some of your recent exhibitions and the photos chosen?

Last year, I presented a retrospective exhibition titled JMW 30, showing concerts I photographed between 2014 and 2024 for the agency P&J Music. It was a very personal moment for me, looking back at ten years of encounters, stages and stories, and realizing how much my way of seeing has changed.

For several years, I have also curated a travelling exhibition called Silence of Sound, which I regularly update. Over time, it has increasingly focused on female performers and the emotional depth of their presence on stage.

Each exhibition includes my own accompanying texts and a Spotify playlist, so visitors can listen to the artists whose performances they see. I want the experience to connect image and sound.

A photograph of Ana Carla Maza was recently selected for the Jazz World Photo competition and became part of the

international exhibition World Jazz Photo, which was an important milestone for me.

When choosing images, I look for authenticity and atmosphere rather than spectacle. I want the viewer to sense something intimate and real.

Your website includes a whole page dedicated to women in music, where you have captured incredible performances of not only musicians from Prague but musicians from across the globe. Can you tell us why you wanted to showcase your photos of women?

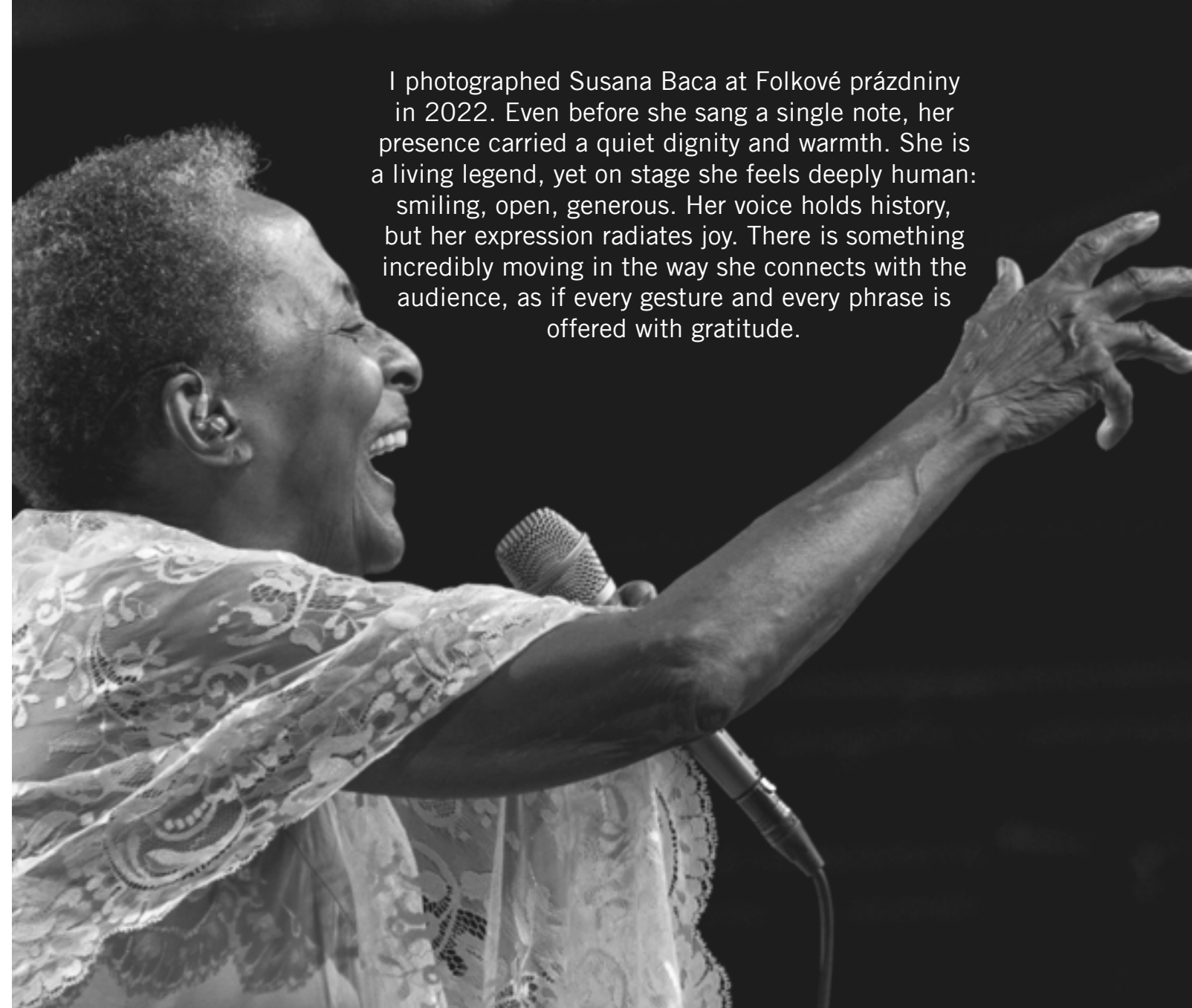
The idea developed naturally as I went through my archive and realised how many powerful performances by women I had captured, not only in jazz but also in world music.

Female artists are often connected with deeply personal stories. Their performances carry emotional intensity, cultural identity and vulnerability alongside technical strength. I am drawn to that honesty. Creating a dedicated page felt like giving space to these narratives and acknowledging how meaningful their presence is within the contemporary music scene.

You have selected some stunning photos of women for this magazine, can you talk us through those? Where and when were they taken and why you chose the photos?

For this selection I chose photographs taken between 2012 and 2025, moments that stayed with me long after the concerts ended. Some of them belong to my series Silence of Sound, where I look for intimacy and the quiet strength hidden inside live performance.

You will find artists such as Diana Krall, Anoushka Shankar, Fatoumata Diawara, Sílvia Pérez Cruz, Oumou Sangaré, Mari



I photographed Susana Baca at Folkové prázdniny in 2022. Even before she sang a single note, her presence carried a quiet dignity and warmth. She is a living legend, yet on stage she feels deeply human: smiling, open, generous. Her voice holds history, but her expression radiates joy. There is something incredibly moving in the way she connects with the audience, as if every gesture and every phrase is offered with gratitude.

Boine, Ana Carla Maza, Susana Baca and also talented Martina Kerteszová from Dis Is Markéta.

I choose these photographs because I feel a strong story in them. I am drawn to energy, emotion, vulnerability and resilience. Sometimes it is a quiet look, sometimes a powerful gesture. In those moments I feel that something real is happening and I want to preserve it.

Are there any upcoming projects or events you are looking forward to?

This summer, Silence of Sound will be presented again, this time in a village Zašová on the border between Moravia and Slovakia.

I like the idea of bringing music photography into intimate, unexpected spaces. Before that, I am looking forward to photographing the Respect Festival in Prague, and later in the season Folkové prázdniny, which will celebrate its 40th anniversary, as well as Maraton hudby Brno. These festivals feel like important points in my yearly rhythm.

At the same time, I would love to travel more and experience music beyond the Czech scene. Visiting an event such as the London Jazz Festival would be a beautiful step, both personally and professionally. For me, the future feels open. I want to continue listening, observing and connecting through music.

Dona Onete
I photographed this amazing Brazilian singer at the Rudolstadt Festival in 2017. She began her musical career after the age of seventy, which makes her presence on stage even more inspiring. There is joy and confidence in her expression, a sense of freedom that comes from embracing life fully and without hesitation. For me, this image celebrates courage and vitality. Dona Onete reminds us that it is never too late to step into the light and share your voice.



I photographed Meral Polat at the Respect Festival in Prague in 2023. Her performance was intense and uncompromising, full of raw emotion and rhythmic power. On stage, she combines tradition with a strong contemporary voice. There is fire in her expression and conviction in every gesture.



I photographed Anoushka Shankar at the Rudolstadt Festival in 2016. As a sitar virtuoso and composer, she bridges classical Indian tradition with contemporary global influences.

In this moment, illuminated on stage, she seemed fully immersed in the music, carrying both heritage and personal vision with calm confidence.



Diana Krall

This photograph was taken in Prague in 2012, during one of the first major concerts I ever photographed. I still remember the mixture of excitement and quiet pressure I felt that evening, standing in front of such a strong musical personality and knowing I had only a few moments to capture something meaningful.

I photographed Silvia Pérez Cruz at Jazzkaar in Tallinn in 2018 during her solo performance. It was one of those rare concerts where the atmosphere becomes almost fragile. Her voice carries an extraordinary emotional depth. That evening, the intimacy of her singing and the honesty in her expression moved me to tears.



BARKA FABIANOVA
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JASNA JOVIĆEVIĆ

PHOTO BY ALEKSANDAR STOJKOVIC

THE COURAGE OF SIMPLY JOY

BY BETTY ACCORSI

With *Simply Joy*, released on 33Jazz Records (2nd January 2026), Serbian saxophonist, composer, and researcher Jasna Jovićević continues to redefine what contemporary jazz can sound like. Leading her Quinary, an ensemble that blends the lyricism of a string quartet with woodwinds, voice, and vibraphone, she crafts music that goes across genres with deep, rich timbres.

The album's title track, written for bass clarinet, vibraphone, cello, and double bass, represents her appreciation for the simple things in life. In Jasna's music, jazz, contemporary classical, folk traces, and free improvisation meet organically, guided by attentive listening rather than genre expectation. At the same time, her artistic voice is inseparable from her wider commitment to research. Through her PhD work and her book on female jazz instrumentalists *Good Morning Jazzwomen* (Orion Art Books), she has examined the challenges women continue to face in the field.

In this conversation, **Jovićević** reflects on creative freedom, music research, building her own artistic path, and finding, against all odds, moments of simple joy.

*Can you tell me more about the choice of the title, *Simply Joy*?*

Simple Joy is actually the title of a second song that's on the album. I gave it [this title] to the whole album. I played bass clarinet [in this song] and I wrote it for bass

clarinet, vibraphone, cello, and bass. It's a song in minor pentatonic scale with simple minor chords. So it's a very simple song, but melodic. It's about simple things that make us happy. Simple Joy is maybe the most lyrical song on the album. People love to hear me playing a bass clarinet, so I knew that this particular song would be interesting to the audience.

How did you arrive at this ensemble rather than a more traditional jazz quartet?

There are many reasons why I would play with strings. One of the reasons is that I love that sound combination. Film and contemporary music are important to me. I started writing for strings while I lived in Toronto 20 years ago. In that time, I was leading a string quartet and the traditional jazz quartet together as one ensemble, which was just beautiful in its richness. Since then, I have composed and arranged for strings, although I have been playing in many different bands; trio with piano and vocal, with bass and drums, but also traditional jazz bands, big band etc. But strings somehow stick with me, it is the language I understand, as it feels like a mixture of genres. If you play in a traditional jazz quartet, you are forced to stay in this traditional form of instrumentation, so you play the given roles in the band.

For example, the drums play the rhythm, bass will play the bass line and accompany, the harmonic instrument will play the harmony, and I will be the soloist. The



PHOTO BY NIKOLA LUCIC

common instrumentation takes you to a certain place which is comfortable, and everybody is used to the assignment. I want to avoid the feeling of safety every time I play [...]; so, I like the change. As the string quartet is not a typical instrumentation for jazz, their roles are not typical, it is more creative for me.

In this album, I hear influences from jazz, classical music and folk traditions. What do you feel most connected with and how do you bring these worlds together in your writing?

I am often asked this question when speaking about my music, but I rarely think of music in terms of genre. I do not experience my practice as belonging exclusively to jazz, classical, or folk traditions, even though all of these musical

languages have shaped me. I do not only play the saxophone, and I do not listen only to jazz. While I recognize that jazz is an important part of my musical identity, it does not fully define how I understand myself as a musician. My relationship to music developed through many different practices, listening experiences, and collaborations, so separating music into genres does not feel natural to me.

When I compose or improvise, I try not to rely on stylistic frameworks or expectations about genre. Instead, I focus on sound itself; on resonance, texture, and the creation of soundscapes. These elements allow different musical traditions to meet organically, not through deliberate stylistic blending or categorization, but through attentive listening and a compositional process guided by sound itself.



PHOTO BY RUEDIGER SCHESTAG

my interest in working with strings, free improvisation, popular music elements, and contemporary jazz. More than specific names, I think I am influenced by sound itself, by soundscapes, environments, and the experience of listening.

What kinds of challenges do you encounter as a female composer and band leader today?

This question is closely connected to my own experience and research. I completed a PhD on female jazz instrumentalists and later wrote the book Good Morning, Jazz Women, where I examined how women are positioned in jazz performance, education, and professional life. I was drawn to this topic partly because I encountered these challenges myself as a composer, saxophonist, and band leader.

Jazz is still a predominantly male field, and women are often represented differently or seen as exceptions rather than simply as colleagues. Even though there are more female musicians today, representation on festival stages, in big bands, and in higher music education remains limited, especially in Southeastern Europe. Because of this, I had to develop my own strategies to continue working and focusing on artistic collaboration, building supportive networks, creating my own projects, and staying committed to playing and composing. These strategies helped me remain active and not give up on music, even when structural obstacles were present. Over time, this persistence became part of my artistic identity, I believe.

What feels like the next step after Simple Joy? Are there projects and directions you're already looking towards?

That is not an easy question. The music industry, especially the contemporary jazz

Have you ever received criticism for not being a traditional jazz composer or performer? And if so, how do you relate to that today?

I do not really experience criticism about not being a traditional jazz composer or performer as criticism in a negative sense. I see it more as an opinion, sometimes reflecting how people understand music through familiar genre boundaries. Many listeners

feel comfortable with what they recognize, and that is completely understandable. My music often moves away from expectations and sometimes surprises both the listener and me. I am not trying to be unconventional, I simply follow my gut. So even if there is criticism, it does not concern me much, because being creative today is not simple. There are so many great musicians and much more music available, there are no real limits anymore;

everything feels possible. You can listen to music from anywhere in the world, which is wonderful, but it also makes it harder to create something truly new or authentic.

How much does your Serbian background influence your music consciously or unconsciously?

I do not really have a clear influence. My education as a jazz musician is

certainly a strong foundation, and improvisation continues to shape how I think about music. At the same time, I grew up listening to pop and funk, and later contemporary classical music alongside jazz, creative and free music. If I had to name one major influence, it would be, definitely, Wayne Shorter. Not only his compositions and playing, but his way of thinking about music as a phenomenon. I learned a great deal from his artistic approach to life, existence. I have also listened extensively to composers such as Bartók, Stravinsky, Arvo Part and Debussy, as well as musicians such as John Surman, David Mott, but also Joni Mitchell or Mingus. These influences partly explain

scene, is changing very quickly. With digital platforms, it is easier than ever to release an album, which also means there is an overwhelming amount of music being produced. In that context, it can be difficult to think immediately about the “next step,” especially after investing so much time and energy into releasing Simple Joy. For me, the next step is actually simple: to play this music live. Albums exist so the music can reach audiences and create opportunities for performance. Touring with a full band across Europe, however, has become more difficult in recent years, particularly without the support structures that many artists rely on, such as agents, management, or publicity teams. Many countries have their own systems of artists support, mobility and touring financing. But not Serbia. Much of this work I organize myself.

Alongside performing, I continue to travel for conferences and artistic research projects. My musical work and research practice are closely connected, and each album grows out of a longer research that eventually becomes music. I am always in the process of curious research.

PHOTO BY NIKOLA LUCIC



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ISABELLE BODENSEH



PHOTOS BY CAROLA SCHMITT

PHOTOS BY CAROLA SCHMITT

ISABELLE BODENSEH DIGNITY

Isabelle Bodenseh's new album *Dignity* presents us with a deeply personal insight into her multi-faceted world. Through her music, we see Isabelle - musician, composer, wife and mother - and how all those worlds connect through truly stunning soundscapes. Her improvisational skills shaped her navigation through life, and the album shines a much-needed light on the gift of bringing a severely disabled child into the world. The joy and challenges of motherhood, the growth that comes out of that explicable bond and where music is at the forefront of human connection. Isabelle lays herself bare and we are all the better for it.

Coming from a family of musicians with French and German heritage, Isabelle found the flute at a young age and it has been her companion ever since. Initially trained as a classical musician, Isabelle found quite early on that the rigidity of classical music left her wanting something more and the moments she spent as a child with her father, just freely playing without sheet music, stayed with her. Exploratory spaces have driven her throughout her career, embracing different musical cultures across the world, with time spent in Cuba and Los Angeles and Isabelle says that she 'became a free world musician with a universal understanding of music, without barriers'

Looking back over her albums, Isabelle reflected on their themes and what has driven her work. Her first album in 2017 *The Good Life* speaks to exactly that, 'the good life', followed by the musical recipe driven *Mrs Bo's Cookbook* in 2018, *Essenza*

(2020) reflecting upon communication and the essence of life in the *Flowing Mind* (2023) brought Isabelle to the place when her new album *Dignity* started to take shape.

Being a mother and after 20 years, you start thinking about what happened, what is, not the end of the story, but what is on the other side. Shortly after Flowing Mind, I was thinking well what is actually flowing in your mind, Isabelle? I had this feeling, thinking about everything over my past albums and I realised for me it was about dignity. I was always searching for something and this is what happens when you are curious, and you look to your inner voice and you actually listen to it.

As a classically trained musician, Isabelle found her home in jazz.

These are two worlds and I think in the middle is the best. You have the hard structure of classical music and the freedom of jazz and in the middle is the gold for me where I really feel very comfortable and I feel complete. I started with classical music but didn't feel complete and felt that there was something missing. For me, it was important to open the door to other cultures and I always wanted to be able to play anywhere in the world. To go to another country and to understand the rhythms and the tonality. It was always my wish to be a world musician, to go to Japan or to Indonesia, any country, and to be able to play with the people there.

Music – and in particular, improvisation - has been an inspired and vital part of communication with Juliette, Isabelle's daughter. Due to a birth defect, Juliette cannot walk, sit up on her own, speak, or hold her head up herself. She cannot coordinate even the smallest movement. Isabelle explains that Juliette 'chose' her.

Shortly after her birth, it suddenly became clear to me that nothing would be as I had imagined. I abandoned the societal clichés of 'a happy family' and instead, with all my creativity, built my own independent perspective on happiness.

My lifelong experiences and perspective on music provided me with a solid foundation. Right from the beginning, it was clear that Juliette felt the music from when she was young, always. She went to my concerts, always in the first row, and she knows every melody, every composition. When I was teaching, she was always lying on the floor, listening to my pupils and laughing when I had to say you didn't practise, she was always very funny.

IT CAN BE JOY.

IT CAN BE FEAR.

IT'S ALL ABOUT DIGNITY.

We had to learn what was dignity? What was respect? What is tolerance? When I see my family now after 23 years, I realised that she was a present for us. She was really a present. And as a family, we could do this, and we were able to handle it. I had to learn patience, but many of these things I already had because of improvisation. In Jazz you have to be flexible and invent something new and this was an enormous base for me to understand my daughter and to never give up, to be very patient, to continue, to keep going even if things don't work.

A deeply personal album, and yet so much that resonates with the audience. The beautiful depth of the bass flute is truly an extension of Isabelle and the connection she has is exhilarating.

I hope the audience can feel the deepness and the breath, especially with the bass flute. That they fuse the authenticity of the music and find their own room in the music and just feel. The bass flute can be very intense, intense vibrations, but it is an extension of me, and sometimes people tell me that I am the flute.

Listening to this album is truly inspiring. Thank you Isabelle for sharing this gift with us all.



ISABELLE LINKS CLICK

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PHOTOS BY CAROLA SCHMITT



A woman with short dark hair, wearing a shiny purple jacket and large hoop earrings, is singing passionately into a microphone. Her mouth is wide open, and her eyes are closed. The background is dark with some purple lighting.

Annie and the Caldells by Tatiana Gorilovsky
Ronnie Scott's
London
January 2026

BEHIND THE LENS

THE
PHOTOGRAPHERS

TATIANA
GORILOVSKY

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Flo Redmond by Tatiana Gorilovsky
Hidden Jazz Club
Stone Nest
London



Emma Smith and Natalie Williams
by Tatiana Gorilovsky
Upstairs at Ronnie Scott's
London



Sarah Jane Morris by Tatiana Gorilovsky
Ronnie Scott's
London
January 2026



Marshall Gilmour Webbs is a new vocal group that was formed after all of them were performing as backing singers on David Gilmour's tour. They brilliantly combine musical styles, voices, harps, guitar and keys into beautiful soulful compositions.





Hattie Webb
Marshall Gilmour Webbs
by Tatiana Gorilovsky

Charley Webb
Marshall Gilmour Webbs
by Tatiana Gorilovsky

onnie scott's

JAZZ



Louise Marshall
Marshall Gilmour Webbs
by Tatiana Gorilovsky



Romany Gilmour
Marshall Gilmour Webbs
by Tatiana Gorilovsky



SACHA BOUTROS CELEBRATES INTERNATIONAL JAZZ DAY

BY ALICE HILL

Jazz, liberty, and dialogue: three carefully chosen words titling a one-of-a-kind event in the heart of Paris, France this April. Dedicated to both UNESCO's [International Jazz Day](#) and the 250th anniversary of the Franco-American Alliance, event organiser Sacha Boutros draws together the many geographies, collaborators, and musics through a central philosophy: jazz as a vehicle for peace.

Motivated by peace, community, and cultural connection, [Sacha Boutros](#) is an esteemed jazz singer, producer and composer. Boutros performs in 14 languages with her Coloratura voice's four and a half octave range, blending sophistication, passion, and storytelling. Originally of Mexican and French-Lebanese heritage, she is based across her home town San Diego and Paris. In 2014, the vocalist founded "Sacha's Supper Club", designed to be reminiscent of 1940s New York café societies. The Supper Club has since collaborated with charity organisation Music Without Borders, demonstrating Boutros' dedication to musical outreach. The April event is a collaboration between UNESCO, International Jazz Day (Journée Internationale du Jazz), the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz, Women In Jazz Media, and Sacha's Supper Club, all coming together at the Parisian venue Sunset Sunside Jazz Club for an unmissable evening of top-quality music.

The event embodies Franco-American

friendship through its Transatlantic lineup, drawing not only on collaborations between European and American creatives but on a legacy of American jazz masters migrating to Paris throughout the last century. The meaning of Franco-American Alliance is broader than the signing of a singular document in 1778; France and the US have been interlinked through a sharing of jazz music for decades. Boutros harnesses this history, carving it into what she dubs a "living exchange between cultures". The [International Jazz Day's](#) themes of peace, dialogue, and mutual understanding arise in the musical conversations of the contrasting artists, while the Franco-American relationship engages diplomacy, respect, and freedom as core values that determine the event's motivation. Crucially, the performers and contributors are linked by "a shared musical heritage", utilising jazz as the community-building force it is known to be.

On the European side of the lineup, [Vincent Bourgeyx](#) represents France as a stellar jazz pianist from Bordeaux. Alike to many of the scheduled performers, Bourgeyx has experienced the invisible dotted line between France and the US first-hand. As heard in his fiery New Yorkian sound, he is very much established in the New York jazz scene. Having studied at Berklee College of Music in the 1990s, the pianist has since collaborated with the likes of Ravi Coltrane. Joining Bourgeyx as the only other contributor with "(France)" next to their

name is [Mélanie Dahan](#). A phenomenal and renowned yet perpetually curious vocalist, Dahan reworks French songs into jazz standards, performing repertoire that ranges from contemporary poems to chanson-style jazz. She is based in Paris, and gained critical acclaim with her album "Latine" in 2011. In congruence with the South American influences from other artists in the lineup, Dahan combines French, Argentinean and Brazilian music.

Beyond L'Hexagone, Russian saxophonist [Dmitry Baevsky](#) has intensely impressive jazz technique, apparent in his fluid and precise playing. Originally from St Petersburg but based in New York for the last twenty years, Baevsky has released countless successful albums over the last two decades. The UK is represented at the event by none other than Women In Jazz Media founder and acclaimed vocalist, pianist, composer, and producer [Fiona Ross](#). At the forefront of the British jazz scene, Ross' style ranges from vintage, nostalgic jazz to the cusp of contemporary genres such as neosoul, mixing in latin jazz and ballads along the way. Long-time collaborator with Ross is bassist [Derek Daley](#), who will also be performing. Daley is an integral part of British jazz as both a musician and as trustee of the UK's National Jazz Archives.

The Sunset Sunside stage this April will also see remarkable contributions from the Americas. Two big names stand out: [Michele Hendricks](#) and [Maxine Gordon](#). "Légende du jazz bebop", as the event website describes her, Michele Hendricks is a renowned singer, songwriter, and lyricist. The American musician first stepped on a stage at the age of eight alongside her father, Jon Hendricks. Since then, across her prolific career, she has collaborated with jazz masters such as Count Basie, Herbie Hancock, and Wayne Shorter. Including jazz historian, writer, archivist, scholar, manager,



and producer [Maxine Gordon](#) in the lineup is an exciting move from event organiser [Sacha Boutros](#). Gordon is known for her landmark publication "Sophisticated Giant: The Life and Legacy of Dexter Gordon", a biography of her late husband, and is currently a Resident Fellow at Harvard University. Often, jazz scholars and writers are absent from live performances, besides lurking in the darkness of the audience with a notepad. By platforming Gordon in this way, Boutros artfully weaves together the practice, history, and critical thought of jazz.

Rounding out the American representation, bassist [Darryl Hall](#) and drummer [Lukmil Perez Herrera](#) have strong links to the Sunset Sunside venue, often frequenting its stage. Hall was born in Philadelphia but has resided in France since 2004. Winner of the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz International Bass Competition in 1995, he has collaborated with American jazz legends such as Ravi Coltrane and Carmen Lundy. Drummer Herrera was born in Cuba, and is now based in France while performing across Europe. He specialises in a wide range of music from salsa to reggae to latin jazz. Joining them on piano is John Lander, who is a pianist, multi-



“With soul, sass, and a voice that knows no bounds, Sacha is not just a singer she’s a storyteller and exquisite entertainer’ Nancy Wilson

Photo by Matt Baker

instrumentalist, performer, producer, composer, arranger, musical director and film-maker from New York. Co-founder of the community art space called trippy.studio in Brooklyn, Lander is currently based between New York, Barcelona, and Paris. Outstanding, irreplicable vocalist from San Francisco and Paris Joan Minor will perform at the event—a slightly different environment from her experience conducting tours across the African continent on behalf of the State Department of the United States. As seen busking in Paris’ Metro stations, Marvin Parks will grace the stage with his soulful vocal sound. The vocalist is originally from Baltimore, and, despite gaining success and performing across Paris, he continues to sing regularly in the Metro.

With all of these varying musical and geographical influences, expect an eclectic and expansive performance that sprawls from the core to the cutting edges of jazz. Event organiser Sacha Boutros places her ethos of inclusivity and peace at the core of this event, forging positive relationships through a mutual appreciation of jazz music. Celebrating two landmark occasions, UNESCO’s International Jazz Day and the 250th anniversary of the Franco-American Alliance, through a showcase of worldwide, world-class musicians and scholars, this event will be nothing short of spectacular.

The event will take place on 30th April 2026 at Sunset Sunside Jazz Club.

Information can be found here

LINKS TO SACHA HERE

LINK TO ALICE HILL HERE



TALKING STRAIGHT

GERMANA STELLA LA SORSA

HAVING INTERVIEWED SOME AMAZING FEMALE ARTISTS, I STARTED TO NOTICE THAT - BESIDES HIGHLIGHTING THEIR WORKS AND WANTING TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THEM AND THEIR LATEST NEWS - I WAS CURIOUS TO HEAR FROM THEM ABOUT SPECIFIC TOPICS.

MOST OF ALL, I WAS HAPPY (AND FEELING REFRESHED!) ABOUT THE FACT THAT NONE OF THEM AVOIDED ANSWERING SOME CONTROVERSIAL QUESTIONS BUT WERE VERY HONEST AND STRAIGHTFORWARD TALKING ABOUT IMPORTANT TOPICS, SUCH AS DAILY CHALLENGES FOR WOMEN IN THE MUSIC/ART BUSINESS, MENTAL HEALTH AND ALL THOSE HOT ISSUES THAT WE SHOULD REALLY TALK MORE ABOUT.

WE'RE ALL LIVING COMMON STRUGGLES - FROM THE DRAINING SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGEMENT TO THE NON-STOP-MULTITASKING WORK OF MUSICIANS IN GENERAL - AND I TRULY BELIEVE THAT IF WE ALL ACKNOWLEDGE AND SHARE THESE ISSUES, WE CAN FEEL LESS LONELY, TO FINALLY BREATHE THE SENSE OF A COMMUNITY THAT WE OFTEN DON'T FEEL PART OF.

THAT'S WHY I'VE CREATED THIS COLUMN: NOT ONLY TO CELEBRATE THE SUCCESSES AND CAREERS OF SOME FABULOUS WOMEN BUT ALSO GIVE THEM A SAFE SPACE TO TALK FREELY ABOUT WHATEVER THEY'D LIKE TO DISCUSS OR RAISE THEIR VOICE ABOUT (BY CHOOSING THE QUESTIONS THAT THEY WANT TO ANSWER TO - HENCE THE REPETITION OF SOME, FOR DIFFERENT ARTISTS).

I HOPE IT WILL INSPIRE YOU, AS THE ARTISTS WHO I'M INTERVIEWING ARE INSPIRING ME: HAPPY INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY!

GERMANA

PHOTO BY MONIKA SJAKUBOWSKA

DIANA TORTI

FEARLESS

Authentic. Brave. Free. To me, these are the three adjectives that best describe Italian singer, improviser and composer Diana Torti and her music. Her latest album "Fearless" - due to be released on April 10th - is a confident statement of her musical bravery.

A collection of compositions to encourage the listener to turn their own fears into fuel that can make a change and help to let things go. An engaging, clever and beautifully constructed work for people in the know, who will appreciate a vocal freedom that harks back, first and foremost, to American singer and poet Jeanne Lee and that not many singers achieve this easily.

To Lee, Diana dedicated her 2019 release "On a Cloud", nominated amongst the best vocal jazz albums of 2019 by The New York City Jazz Record and Jazz Views. The album immediately stands out as a brilliant test of bravery and inner reflection, and it's evidence of her extensive research of the many expressive possibilities; through sounds and vocal improvisation but also of her musical background that - quoting Diana's bio - varies from "the evocative atmosphere of ancient music, the warmth and improvisation of jazz music, the aesthetics of bel canto and the daring singing of contemporary repertoire".

From an artist who is devoting her career to the search for freedom of expression and beauty, "Fearless" comes to the world at the right moment in time. It's both the energy boost and the meditative caress that we all need now.



Photo by **MONIKA S JAKUBOWSKA**

GSLs: Who inspired you the most at the beginning of your career and why?

I started singing in my teens. I've always needed role models to inspire my journey over the years. Early on, legends like Ella Fitzgerald and Sarah Vaughan, to name a few, ignited a strong passion for jazz singing in me. I wanted to listen to and absorb as much of their language and art as possible. They've helped me make those influences my own and go beyond them to find my own unique style. While my curiosity remains as strong as ever, my focus has shifted over time. I've become drawn to artists who blend musical artistry with strong social commitment. Abbey Lincoln for example, whom I absolutely adore. However, the real turning point was discovering Jeanne Lee. There was a further transformation that has strongly influenced my vocal exploration from that moment on. Broader space for improvisation, a profound sense of expressive freedom combined with an awareness of the intimate fusion between artistic beauty and the beauty of the human person that this great artist was able to express.

GSLs: What do you consider your biggest achievements in life and what are you most proud of in your career as a woman in the music business?

At this stage of my life, I recognize that I've always strived to improve over time, despite the difficulties. You have to find the right balance between being yourself, pursuing your own path, and adapting to change and the unexpected without losing yourself. Over time, I'm learning more and more not to be afraid to express myself. It's not a given, and I consider myself a very lucky person. There are places where even freedom of speech or being is denied. My music is an expression of the feelings and experiences of the moment. For me, it's essential, and the two aspects are merged; one ties into the other. When you compose or perform,

the music you make is influenced and conveys all of this. To return to Lee, for example, I'm very proud to have dedicated a project to her with my 2019 album, "On a Cloud" (SLAM). I wanted to let myself go with the sound I felt without worrying about style, context, or whether I was right in what I was doing. And I'm proud of the fact that I felt authentic and free like never before, full of myself, despite a market that often suffocates this authenticity by forcing us to follow clichés or trends just because they're imposed on us from outside.

GSLs: Tell us about your latest release, "Fearless". Where does the inspiration for the music come from? Is there a specific message that you wish to share with it?

My upcoming album is called "Fearless" (Tambora Music). It features original music composed by Sabino de Bari, my partner in life and art. I always find myself in great harmony with his elegant and captivating melodies. They inspired me with lyrics I'm very fond of. They are songs of courage tied to personal experiences, life stories, and emotional bonds close to my heart and that taught me the meaning of not being afraid. It's an album that crossed two years of my life, during which many things changed personally, and I had to deal with some significant separations. It was a journey that brought together so many contrasting and intense emotions. The thread that held everything together was precisely a fearless attitude. It's also the first album I've recorded as a quartet. In addition to Sabino on classical guitar, there are Andrea Colella on double bass and Francesco De Rubeis on drums. They have enriched the tracks with their skill as great instrumentalists.

GSLs: Are there any tracks on your album(s) that are particularly dear to you and why?

Oh, I love the whole album! All tracks are part of my life and express some of my

deepest feelings, they meant the world to me. If I must choose a few, I would say "Montmartre Café", which represents my first trip to Paris. The trees in the little square seem to question my astonishment, and I tell them all about my emotion at breathing in the atmosphere that embraced some of the greatest innovative artists and painters of 20th-century history. It's the second single that will be out on March 20th.

Then the first single out a few weeks ago, "The Hawk's Hills". It tells of the determination in pursuing one's dreams. It is the story of a hawk that manages to fly towards the hills it has always longed to reach, transforming its limitations into driving force and vitality.

GSLs: What advice would you give to someone who worries about stereotypes and labels or to someone who is struggling to take the steps forward towards what they really want to do and/or be?

Very difficult question, I can answer by sharing my personal experience. I've been working for years to build the resistance to face situations that put me to the test, precisely for what you're talking about. Feeling inadequate, not good enough, or even unsuitable for a role or situation happens to me almost daily because of labels or stereotypes. Clearly, years and experience have helped me to better manage these events. For example, as a woman, I already find myself daily facing impossibilities or limitations due to a culture that still considers women inferior to men. Moreover, I am not in my twenties anymore, think of the combination of the two in current years! The jazz industry itself shares these stereotypes. It's a cultural issue: until we recognize a universal human equality starting from the birth of each of us, we won't accept that being different doesn't mean having a limitation or deficiency. And here we could talk

about this for hours... recent political and economic developments are highlighting significant steps backwards toward the recognition of even already acquired rights for women (see the abortion situation in some US states, to name one). For every small step forward, there's a step back.

Talking about it and sharing each of our stories is a piece of advice I feel I can give. Organizations like WiJM are essential and are making a huge difference in supporting female musicians experiencing this condition. We're not alone, we must repeat it out loud, and it's true!

"Don't be afraid" is perhaps a second piece of advice. It's a theme very dear to me (I dedicated my upcoming album to it). Fear feeds on fear itself and withdrawing into ourselves isolates us. This is what I felt I had to express through the songs on "Fearless", which captured a moment in my life when I was often afraid. But I had to find a way to let it go and transform it into the strength to reclaim myself. Working on the music, lyrics and the songs was the way I pulled these threads together, and as a result I felt like I was untangling a deeply rooted emotional knot.

GSLs: We hear a lot about artists struggling to keep up with a music industry that is increasingly demanding. Nowadays, it seems like artists feel more and more obliged to constantly create content and new 'products' - even if this often impacts their wellbeing - in order not to 'disappear' or for the fear of feeling like a failure and being forgotten. What do you think about this?

More than a feeling, this is a reality. In my opinion the responsibility lies with an economic and social system that oppresses our space, our time, and, in a sense, our personal history. I believe this is a general situation. Artists, being so emotionally exposed by the very nature of their

profession, are probably more vulnerable to this. It's not easy at all, and we live in a constant swing between survival and feeling overwhelmed. I believe everyone needs to analyse their own situation. There is an outside and an inside, and I think it's important to understand who is responsible for what happens, otherwise we will think we are the ones doing the wrong thing and even feel guilty for what is happening. It's important not to lose our sense of reality, to take an interest in everyday life, to remain curious, to engage and share with others, so as not to feel isolated. The meaning of life is much deeper than the logic of a marketing product; it is ourselves and our identity that we must protect and cultivate. If we make a mistake or fail at something, we will suffer a little, but then we must get up and continue our journey. If we lack this attitude, we must seek the help of an expert who can help us work on it; it must be regained. The rest is a consequence of this and represents only a part of our life. Authentic relationships with others, mutual respect, and honesty must be reclaimed. It's a continuous effort that requires perseverance and endurance. We must learn this otherwise we're at the mercy of external events, and this makes our relationship with the current industry even more complicated. It's not easy, but that's what I try to do, amidst the ups and downs that are natural for each of us.

GSLs: Is there a specific matter that you think we should talk more about? What would you suggest to sort it/ improve the situation?

More than a specific issue, I'd like us to always keep both our eyes and ears open and attentive to how things unfold around us. And then I'd like to see a movement from words to action more often, and more involvement from women and men, also those with greater visibility. Just like in life, people in the jazz community complain and condemn inequalities, stereotypes, or injustices. But just as often, when concrete

action needs to be taken, many back off for fear of losing something. So, I would like everyone to rediscover a deeper and more human sense of community, because we are all connected to each other and can bring about deeper changes together.

GSLs: What's on your 'bucket list', what are your dreams at this very moment and what are your next steps?

Professionally, I'm currently focused on the album, which will be released on April 10th. The work we must do as independent artists is huge and goes far beyond the creative process, so it's hard to think of anything else now. But in the wake of the freedom of expression we mentioned earlier, I'm very happy to be able to share my music and my vocal research. I also have a great passion for writing lyrics, which I will continue to cultivate.

The coming months will be dedicated to sharing and promoting the project. The album launch will be in Italy, in my beloved Rome on April 10th at the Arciliuto Jazz Club and on the 13th at Birrjazz in Formia, two places I deeply love. We're also working on upcoming dates in the UK this Autumn. I'll promote the new dates on my website and social media soon.

If I may return to the word "dreams" in your question, I can't help but connect it to something broader than music. In recent years, there has been a critical social and political situation that is negatively impacting our lives and undermining our history. So, a dream is for us to return to a deeper human sense of ourselves and of life in general. And I think artists have an important role in this, because they can perceive events and moments through precious lenses, capturing what is invisible to the eye and transforming it into powerful and authentic emotions, accessible to many. Maybe "Fearless" is coming out now, precisely because of this global situation.

This is a dream that I hope will not remain just a dream but will soon become a reality.

Photo by MONIKA S JAKUBOWSKA



HANNAH HORTON

AUTHENTIC

The first time that I wrote about saxophonist and composer Hannah Horton was to review in 2023 her series “Jazz at the Cottage” - a live-streamed series of concerts from Hannah's own cottage – which was one of the many dazzling things that Hannah has created over the years. As I wrote at the time, I was immediately captivated by the level of professionalism of her leading and by the spread of energy during the whole concert. After having met her in person, I was captivated not only by that professionalism but, most of all, by her glowing, musical aura. And this glow comes from the authenticity of a musician that is not just producing and “packing” a product in an oversaturated industry, but is sincerely sharing a big part of herself, creating something to make a difference in the world.

Hannah is an inexhaustible resource of art and, after two studio albums, a live one, and many, many collaborations on her way (including J Steps, an award winning jazz ensemble for female and non-binary jazz musicians under the age of 18), is releasing her new album, “Stories On The Wind”, due to be out this Spring and then presented on the 19th of July at Pizza Express Live – Soho, London.

Presented as “her most personal and ambitious project to date”, “Stories On The Wind” is a collection of moments that, starting from feelings, untangle into stories, with Hannah beautifully laid bare and sharing herself with the listeners, immediately connecting with them. And once again, I'm immediately captivated by her.

Using the words of Dexter Gordon's widow, Maxine Gordon – who wrote the liner notes for the album – “I am sure listeners will feel what I felt about her honesty, inspiration, and a life fully devoted to music.”



Photo by NICK SLEEP

GSLS: Is there anything or anyone that had a particular impact on your career or music?

Two people really stand out for me. One is Richard, who first came to me as an adult player over 7 years ago. Coaching him reminded me how powerful music can be when someone discovers their own voice and confidence through it. He also somehow managed to turn it round and boost my confidence in my playing and performing, which is what led me to start planning my 2021 studio album 'Inside Out'. I still coach him now and he has become a dear friend and confidant!

And of course Nick, my fiancé. He came into my life at a time when I was questioning everything. He really encouraged me to believe that being an artist was possible and not just something other people got to do. Having someone who genuinely believes in you changes how you see yourself. His support helped me make some brave decisions about my career and my life. He encouraged me to start writing again and that they were good pieces, and whenever I have self doubt days (which are quite common) he helps me see how far I have come and all the positives.

GSLS: What do you consider your biggest achievements in life and what are you most proud of in your career as a woman in the music business?

J Steps is something I'm incredibly proud of. Seeing young women and non-binary people grow in confidence, write their own music and realise they belong in this industry is very special. Watching their journey to record at Abbey Road this spring and perform their own compositions is honestly emotional. Their fearless energy as an ensemble is just so wonderful to witness! They improvise, play backings behind each other, encourage and support each other - they are an incredibly special group.

Personally, I'm also proud that I made the shift from being mainly a teacher to becoming an artist who performs and writes original music. That felt risky, especially later in life, but it has brought me back to why I fell in love with music in the first place. It feels right to have a balance of performing, coaching and one to one mentor sessions.

GSLS: Are there any gigs or recording sessions that you cherish the most and why?

My first gig back at Haverhill Arts Centre after lockdown was incredibly important to me. During that quiet period I realised I wanted to rebalance my life and really give being an artist a proper chance. Standing on stage with my band that night, sharing music and stories with the audience, I suddenly felt I was exactly where I was meant to be. Launching The Swinging Cat Jazz Club soon followed at the venue. Watching a community of regular jazz lovers develop and form friendships through music has been amazing and I love inviting incredible artists to play at the club.

Recording Stories on the Wind at Red Kite Studio was also unforgettable. For the first time I went into the studio feeling confident in my musical ideas and trusting the band completely. Martin Levan captured my sound in a way I'd never really heard before. Hearing how I actually play, the shape and character of each note, was quite emotional. It made me feel more secure in my identity as a musician and as a woman leading a project.

GSLS: Tell us about your latest release, "Stories on the Wind". Where does the inspiration for the music come from? Is there a specific message that you wish to share with it?

"Stories on the Wind" is very personal". Each piece is connected to people,

memories or moments in my life. Some are about hope, some about loss, some about finding your own path when things feel uncertain. If there is a message, it's about connection, kindness and having the trust to be yourself. Life can feel very noisy and divided, and I wanted to make music that gives people space to feel, reflect and maybe feel less alone for a while.

GSLS: Who are the musicians involved in your project and how did your collaboration begin?

I'm lucky to work with musicians who are also close friends. Many of us have played together in different settings over the years, so there's already trust and understanding when we go into the studio or onto the stage. That familiarity allows everyone to play freely and honestly. The band really brings the music to life. Sam Leak - piano and organ, Steve Taylor - drums and percussion, Rob Statham - electric bass.

GSLS: Are there any tracks on your album(s) that are particularly dear to you and why?

"Whisper" is very dear to me because it's essentially a love letter and a thank you to Nick who is incredibly important in my life. It's simple and honest, and I didn't try to overcomplicate it. The response to the track has been incredibly moving. It was recently featured as Track of the Week on Jazz FM, and hearing it shared so widely has felt very special, especially because it comes from such a personal place.

"The Fortune Teller" is very close to my heart because it was written as a thank you to the people who supported the album through crowdfunding. So many incredible people gave their generosity, encouragement and belief to help make this project happen, and I wanted to create something joyful in return. I actually took

the tune into the studio in Wales as more of a work in progress, and it really blossomed once the band started playing it together. There's such a happy energy in the track, and every time I hear it, it makes me smile and reminds me of all those people who helped bring the album to life. I feel hugely grateful to them.

GSLS: What do you think are the main issues for musicians at the moment, and in particular for women in the business? How do you cope with these and what can be actually done – on a practical level – to sort these issues?

Financial insecurity is still a big challenge, and women still sometimes feel they have to prove themselves more or fight stereotypes about what roles they should play. Practical solutions include better support for emerging artists, more visibility for women leaders in music, and creating environments where young musicians see role models who look like them. Education and mentorship programmes like J Steps can make a real difference. Personally, I cope by surrounding myself with supportive collaborators and focusing on making meaningful music rather than trying to compete with everything happening around me.

GSLS: Which advice would you give to someone who worries about stereotypes and labels or to someone who is struggling to take the steps forward towards what they really want to do and/or be?

It's easy to wait until you feel ready, but you rarely feel ready. Sometimes you just have to take the step anyway, follow your heart and give it a go. Your individuality is actually your strength. Trying to fit into someone else's idea of success rarely brings happiness. Find your own voice and trust it, and remember life is a journey including your music.

GSLs: In a music industry that is constantly changing, what advice would you give to the new generation of musicians and performers and which lessons would you share with someone who wants to undertake a musical path as a professional?

Be adaptable and open to learning. The industry changes constantly, so resilience and curiosity are as important as talent. Be prepared to be your own booker, promoter, social media person, and accountant. Also remember why you started. If you lose the joy of music, everything becomes harder. Protect that love for playing.

GSLs: We hear a lot about artists struggling to keep up with a music industry that is increasingly demanding. Nowadays, it seems like artists feel more and more obliged to constantly create content and new 'products' - even if this often impacts their wellbeing - in order not to 'disappear' or for the fear of feeling like a failure and being forgotten. What do you think about this?

It can be exhausting, and I have burnt out from it in the past. Sometimes it feels like artists are expected to be full time content creators as well as musicians. That pressure can take away the space needed to create meaningful work. I think audiences also appreciate authenticity. It's okay not to share everything all the time.

GSLs: How do you take care of yourself? Do you take breaks from social media? What would you recommend to balance life outside work and being an artist?

I try to spend time in nature, exercise, and make sure I have time with the people I love where music isn't the main topic. I try to step back from social media when needed, but if I'm honest I'm not good at it! It's important to remember that life happens away from screens - well that's what I tell myself and I try to follow my own advice if I can.

GSLs: Is there a specific matter that you think we should talk more about? What would you suggest to sort it/ improve the situation?

I think we should talk more about sustainability in music careers. Not just success, but how artists build long term, healthy lives in the industry without burning out.

GSLs: What's on your 'bucket list', what are your dreams at this very moment and what are your next steps?

Right now, I have two primary focuses. Firstly sharing "Stories on the Wind" with as many people as possible and continuing to grow as a composer and performer. Secondly, enabling J Steps to have an awesome time at Abbey Road recording their album with the music I'm writing for them. I'd love to tour more internationally, keep developing J Steps, and keep creating music that connects with people. Ultimately, I just want to keep making music that feels honest and meaningful.



Photo by NICK SLEEP



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A BEAUTIFUL LIFE LIVED DANI HARRIS (1988-2026)

**LIFE WITH DANI WAS
ALWAYS AN ADVENTURE**

BY KIM CYPHER

When I heard the very sad news that Dani Harris had been diagnosed with a brain tumour, it personally resonated with me, having lost my mum to the same diagnosis back in 2000. I only met Dani once, but she left a lasting impression on me as one of life's most vibrant, colourful, creative and hard-working souls.

Married to UK Jazz and Blues guitarist Remi Harris, Dani was very much devoted to Remi's music career, actively working behind the scenes coordinating and arranging much of Remi's busy touring schedule, allowing him the freedom to focus on his music and performance. She also played a key role in instigating projects and getting things done.

Dani loved a life full of adventure and enjoyed nothing more than being on the road. In her free time, she was inspired by nature and all things creative. She enjoyed spending time with Remi and their beloved animals, experimenting with cookery, walking in the forest, socializing with friends and family and creating amazing crochet garments.

Having visited Dani and Remi in their

stunning rural Worcestershire home a few years ago, I returned to visit Remi following the loss of Dani. I knew it would be an emotional visit, but I really wanted to spend time finding out more about their unique relationship, professional partnership and the beautiful life they lived together.

As soon as I arrived, I remembered how welcome Dani and Remi had made me feel the first time I visited. It is a home full of vibrant colours, home-made crafts, photographs and an extensive menagerie of much-loved animals. With a live music venue in the barn next door, you can see how perfectly idyllic this would be for a quirky, bohemian husband-and-wife team.

Walking past a friendly but feisty group of geese to the front door, I was greeted by Remi together with two adorable and very excited dogs, Patch and Leo. It immediately felt like home.

With the dogs comfortably positioned for continued cuddles, a pot of coffee freshly brewed and some pleasant background jazz playing, Remi and I casually chatted about Dani and the life they shared together...

Kim – “So, how did you and Dani first meet?”

Remi – “We met at a gig in 2007 in Hereford. We were both nineteen years old at the time. We got chatting and I ended up going back to a party at her house. We were pretty much inseparable from that day onwards.”

Kim – “You obviously had so much in common, you shared a love of music and Dani was so creative.”

Remi – “Yes, very creative. She did lots of crocheting and used to make all these massive crochet blankets.”

Kim – “Wow! I only met Dani once, but when I think of her, I think colourful, creative, homely.”

Remi – “Yeah, Dani was all those things. She was also an amazing cook and an adventurous cook too. She used to love trying out all different kinds of food. There’s a bookshelf full of various recipes from different countries and cultures.”

Kim – “Did she try them all out?”

Remi – “Yeah, and I was the guinea pig!”

Kim – “Oh, lucky you.”

Remi – “She’d put on these big banquets where we’d invite twenty or thirty people around. We’d get as many tables as we could, in here or in the venue next door and she’d cook all this amazing food. She loved to experiment cooking recipes from different cultures, particularly curries.”

Kim – “She clearly loved to feed people, bless her. I remember she made up some yummy food hampers, was it during the pandemic?”

Remi – “Yes, and she was doing that before

as well. She used to do Christmas hampers. During Covid she turned the kitchen in the venue over there into a catering kitchen so it could be signed off for proper commercial use. She used to cook curries and things, and we’d deliver them round locally. Then, when the venue opened back up, she started doing food for the gigs because the kitchen was there. She loved that kind of thing”

Kim – “I could tell straight away that Dani was one of those people who is all about giving to others. I imagine her as a swan gliding gracefully across the water, but beneath the water it’s all going on, isn’t it?”

Remi – “Oh yeah, definitely. She would be spinning a lot of plates all the time.”

Kim – “So, tell me what Dani did behind the scenes because I know there was a lot going on. There’s Yardbird Arts and your live venue The Hatch...”

Remi – “Yardbird Arts is our company that we set up as an umbrella company to put everything under. It’s a record label, we released my albums on it, and we were essentially an agent, although we basically booked gigs for my projects. We also promoted gigs locally in halls and the venue here. Dani would also book all the tours, you know, sort the gigs and she’d come on the road with us.”

Kim – “Was she your tour manager?”

Remi – “Yeah, she’d book all the hotels, make sure everyone knew where they were going, sell the merch. Sometimes she’d do the sound and lights as well. She could just do anything that was needed.”

Kim – “Amazing isn’t it, to have somebody like that in your team?”

Remi – “Yeah, I mean she was the head of everything. We have some friends working





with us on admin part time, but she was kind of the boss, basically the manager.”

Kim – “That must have been really invaluable to you because clearly, she was devoted to your music career and one of her passions was your music.”

Remi – “It gave me a lot of freedom to just concentrate on playing guitar. There are certain jobs that I would do, like drive and I take care of most of the social media side of things, but other than that, I could focus mostly on my music, on my playing and practicing. So yeah, it gave me a lot of space creatively.”

Kim – “That’s such a privilege as a musician, isn’t it? I know one of things we say is that we want to be able to focus more on our music as 99% of the time musicians are having to do everything other than their music.”

Remi – “Yeah, yeah. I was so lucky in that respect, and she loved it as well. It wasn’t like a chore. I think sometimes for us musicians you know, you want to be playing your instrument, and the rest can feel like a chore sometimes. But for Dani, she loved it. She loved getting up and going in the office every morning. That was her thing. She absolutely loved it and so, between us we were this kind of team. We managed to get everything sorted. We were really lucky like that.”

Kim – “Absolutely. That really comes across. I mean you were clearly meant to be together, such a strong team. You both had your roles and together, it just worked. That’s worth a lot. So, tell me about your live venue The Hatch. How did that all come about?”

Remi – “So, originally that was a recording studio. When we moved here there was an operating recording studio in the two buildings next door and Ben who I started

my trio with, he was the rhythm guitarist from the beginning, he grew up here. Ben was running the studio when we moved in, but when he moved away the studio was not being used so we said we could put some gigs on in there. So, the live room, which was the live room of the studio, became the venue for the gigs. The control room became Dani’s office and the dead room, which is the padded room, that’s the room where I practice and do my videos. So, we managed to make use of it all and Ben’s dad Robin was happy for us to do it. We did a monthly gig for years and we’d also put things on in local halls as well. Dani coordinated it all and booked all the musicians, sorted out the promotion, mailing list, tickets, all that kind of stuff.”

Kim – “That’s a lot to do. I mean, it’s a full-time job, isn’t it?”

Remi – “Yeah, but the biggest job she had was booking the tours. Sometimes there would be around 24 gigs in the tour. That’s a lot to sort out. The rest almost became a bit of fun on the side really. We loved putting on gigs locally, but our goal was always to go on the road a lot and tour about the place.”

Kim – “So, obviously if you’re touring, that’s one thing. But, if you were here at home, what would your daily life together be like?”

Remi – “Well, lots of dog walking or running, I like to run. Our favourite place, Wyre Forest is about a ten-minute drive from here. It’s a huge forest; you can get lost in there all day and we’d go and do that if we weren’t working. But Dani’s day would be up in the office straight away answering emails, doing all that kind of thing. Then, she might do a bit around the veg garden and stuff like that.”

Kim – “You also have lots of animals!”

Remi – “We’ve got goats, geese, dogs, cats. We’ve had ducks, turkeys, fish, chickens...a magpie living in here.”

Kim – “Tell me about the magpie, his name was Merlin wasn’t it?”

Remi – “Yeah, we rescued him. We found him just out there and he was a tiny little chick. We think his nest had been raided by crows and he’d fallen from the tree. It was during Covid, so we brought him in here. We phoned a charity and they told us to feed him raw minced meat every 45 minutes.”

Kim – “Gosh, that’s quite a commitment!”

Remi – “Yeah. We fed him with tweezers until he grew a bit stronger and then eventually, he just lived in the house and then we tried to let him go once he started trying to fly. We opened the front door and let him out. He just flew straight back in! So, it was fine for him to just mingle around. He’d come in through the window and eat the cat food then fly back out. He’d come on dog walks with us and fly post to post along the fence.”

Kim – “Wow, what a lovely adventure.”

Remi – “Yeah, it was good fun. It was always an adventure with Dani. She was just very open minded about everything. She wanted to try new things and explore new places. So, it was good, yeah.”

Kim – “There’s another lady in your life, of the feline variety...Mrs Morris. She’s quite a legend, tell me more about her.”

Remi – “Well, one day I came home from a gig, and she was in the kitchen, a tiny little kitten, and you could fit her in the palm of your hand. She became immediately attached to me and she used to sit on my shoulder. Now she’s a bit older, she likes to watch me practice. She sits there just purring, looking at me while I’m practicing.

She’s such a sweet cat.”

Kim – “You’ve been busy recently touring with Man of the World and your Hot Club Trio. Do you think being busy with your music is helping you cope with your loss?”

Remi – “Yeah, yeah definitely. I find it harder when I’m at home to be honest. When I’m out with the guys it’s a good team spirit. They all knew Dani really well. Shane, the drummer, has known her as long as I have. We all go back a long way. So, we’ve been dealing with it together basically on the road. We’ve just been in the busiest part of the year actually. We were in Edinburgh last week and Cornwall the week before, so we’ve literally just spanned the length of the country pretty much.”

Kim – “So, you’d rather be busy like that?”

Remi – “Yeah, I like it. I like playing music. It helps so, so much. Dani wouldn’t have been happy with me cancelling gigs, so that was never on the table. We had to weigh up all the different options, and we’ve decided that Yardbird Arts is going to continue and it’s going to be in her memory. Our good friends Anna and Ceri who work for us have been able to up their hours and cover some of the work Dani did, and I’ve taken on some of the jobs so, between us, we’re going to keep it going. Anna and Ceri collectively have been doing amazing you know. They’ve taken bookings into 2028 now already. They’ve done a really amazing job. I’ve got another friend, Simon, who’s going to come onboard as well and help out with things.”

Kim – “That’s brilliant. I was going to ask you if you had plans to keep things going or anything you’d like to do to continue Dani’s work.”

Remi – “Dani always wanted to do a festival. We never managed to do that but maybe we will one day in her memory. It’s

quite a big job, which is why we never got around to it. But she always wanted to do a festival. It nearly happened last year actually. I do plan to do a monthly jazz club, that’s the goal. We’ll get there eventually, but we have to get the touring sorted first and I’ve got two albums basically finished and ready to release. So, the jazz club will come and then I hope one day we’ll be able to do a festival as well, as a celebration. But there’s lots of other things to sort out first.”

A festival for Dani would be amazing, and I can already envisage the colourful scene, full of people sharing their love for creativity and adventure. There would be fabulous musicians, quirky arts and crafts, animals freely roaming and a wonderful selection of delicious food of course.

Dani’s zest for life, her love of adventure and incredible positive attitude shone through in every word Remi said. Clearly, nothing filled Remi with more joy than talking about his beautiful wife and sharing memories of their very special life together. It was without doubt a unique partnership and a life full of love, creativity, animals, music, good food, devotion and a shared passion to live life as an adventure. There is no doubt that Remi together with support from friends and family, will be sure to continue Dani’s legacy and memory. She will live on in the hearts of all those who knew her – a vibrant rainbow of colours that will forever shine brightly. What a beautiful life lived.

Interview photos at home by Ron Milsom. Personal photos of Dani and Remi’s life together supplied with permission by Remi.



YOLANDA CHARLES



Photo by Maria Zhytnikova

Photo by Tina Korhonen



YOLANDA CHARLES

THE QUEEN OF GROOVE

BY ISABEL MARQUEZ

When I was first told I was going to be speaking to Yolanda Charles, I instantly recognised the name. Like many, I was guilty of knowing Charles for her incredible career as a session musician with the likes of Paul Weller, Squeeze, BB King, Mick Jagger... the list goes on. Charles has been playing professionally since 1989 and is a definite force in the industry. But I wanted to take this opportunity to understand Charles as a bassist and music maker in her own right, as she builds on her own bands, Project PH and Triometry, and music support consultancy, The Dawning Cooperation, as well as running her own record label Mamayo Records. It is understandable that she was awarded an MBE through the 2020 Birthday Honours for services to music.

It would be almost impossible to narrow down Charles' musical interests, as she does it all so well. From fusion to film music, Yolanda Charles has an understanding of the bass like no other, and it is fantastic to see this skill being passed down through her teaching at institutions like the Royal Northern College of Music and Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance.

I caught up with Yolanda Charles, to find out more about her past and how it has influenced her ever exciting present life and career.

So firstly, how are you? And what have you been up to recently? Any projects or music that you've been working on?

Yes, I'm in a trio called Triometry. We were looking for a science-y name as it's a personal interest of mine. Previously I've led my own bands, this band is led by myself and Nick Linnik, who is the guitarist of the band. He's writing most of the stuff because it's a guitar-led trio and I'm involved in the arranging side of things. There's three of us including drums, with our drummer Nicolas Viccaro. He's a bass player's drummer.

What does that mean?

Well, it's just that if you look at his resume, you'll see that he often gets hired by bands that are led by bass players. So Étienne M'Bappé books him often, Richard Bona also, even Kinga Głȳk, who's a rising star on the jazz scene.

So, I'm looking forward to people getting to know their music because I think they are pretty special musicians. And then there's me playing fusion, which is new for me really at this level. So I'm excited to change my direction a bit as well.

I also have another band called Project PH, which is a vocal-led band. That band

is parked briefly while I focus on this other project. And also because we put an album out and it's awaiting promotion. We've got a new track coming out this year for that band too, loads of new stuff happening.

So with this band that you're currently with, you're currently recording an album. And then what happens after? Do you go on a kind of touring route? Or is it just performing anywhere?

There are a few venues and promoters that I can approach to give us one-off gigs. But because our drummer lives in France, we should be doing block bookings and trying to book a tour. It's hard to get a tour in place. So I think the idea is just to get some videos out there to show people what we're doing, and hope that you can get enough interest that people will agree to give you a gig. In the jazz scene, it's less tricky because the scene is so small, so it is easier to get gigs in some ways compared to big pop venues. But they're usually not very well paid.

So you were talking there about playing between different genres. What changes in your style of playing when you go from one genre to another? Or is there kind of a 'feel' change?

Each genre has its own particular identity for the bass player. So the bass player needs to understand what's appropriate for that genre. And you get that knowledge through listening or just learning what someone else has played and then adapting it to your style a little bit. Influencing the part in the way you play, but you're still playing the right kind of combination of notes that is appropriate for that genre. And that goes for every style.

You have the right rhythmic interplay, the right understanding about the harmony and the feel. I mean, every bass player and musician should be able to adapt

their feel to whatever is required. But it's a skill, definitely, and not everyone can do it. And those of us that can, get booked from all different directions, as we're highly adaptable, which is great.

But it also makes you a bit known for doing a lot of different things and not necessarily known for doing one specific thing, which has its value as well. So it's not to say that it's better to do everything, but it's definitely a pathway for a career if you can do a lot of different styles, you know?

And do you have a particular favourite?

Well, my first, what I was raised with, I think everybody loves what they were raised with. I was raised with funk, soul and jazz. In terms of taste now, I like jazz fusion a lot because it gives me a chance to stretch out as a musician. And it's sort of almost formative years stuff. I started listening to jazz fusion when I was in my late teens. And it just opened my eyes and blew my mind. So I've never sort of lost that love for being surprised and impressed by the music.

This trio that we're doing is jazz fusion, and it feels like I've come full circle to do the thing that I wanted to do when I was young. So it's quite exciting.

Could you tell me a bit about how you got into the bass and your background in music?

I've got a book that I'm releasing chapter by chapter on Substack where I include a lot of detail about how I began playing and what influenced me. But a broad overview is that music was mega important in the house.

I had a musical ear, but no musicians around me. School enabled me to learn an instrument because they had that programme for people from my background. And I ended up falling in love with playing

Photo by Tina Korhonen



an instrument. I found the right instrument after many years. You know, I started when I was seven. I found the bass when I was about 15.

I went on to do a little bit of Further Education in music, but stopped at a point before degree and postgrads and A-levels even, I didn't even do that. And became self-taught from that point onwards. The reason for that was because I actually ended up starting work.

I think I know that I'm an innate musician and I would have been doing something musical, even just for fun, if I hadn't done it as a career. It's just the thing that makes the most sense to me in terms of the way the world works, you know.

You've had such a broad career so far. What is a standout moment for you?

I'd say that most standout moments have always been personal victories that no one else knows about: things you've overcome, anxiety moments or bucket list things that nobody else knew.

I think playing my own music for the first time ever, that I'd written. That was monumental for me.

What's your composition process? How do you write a song?

I realised that my songs are all written from real life experiences, but not necessarily mine. So I might be witnessing somebody else's story, I might be inspired by a conversation I've had or listened to. It's got to a point, because I've done that a lot, that I'm a writer as well. It's not my career, but I do consider myself a wordsmith. I would say that now, because I've done it so much over the years, that I can write a story

from anything: the elements, objects, other people's stories, ideas, abstract concepts.

[Do you ever start from a bass riff? Or do you start with the harmony, coming up with a chord progression? Or is it just kind of what happens in the moment and the story you want to tell?](#)

I could intentionally decide I want to write a bass riff heavy tune and then everything will come from the bass. If I'm writing based on a story, then it comes from the story. The story gives me harmony because the harmony is chosen based on what the sentiment is.

Also, writing from the melody and then harmonising it afterwards so that the harmony can go in any direction, that's always fun as well.

[I was just wondering if you've ever faced difficulties as a woman in the music industry?](#)

I think that's the experience of most women, isn't it? I mean, I've been in many situations where I've offered and volunteered ideas. Then seeing that it's been disregarded or ignored and then the same ideas pop up as if they're new but they're offered by a man and taken seriously. This happens in my business too. So it's not even that I'm not respected.

I have some kind of credential people seem to respect, but it does feel that there's this barrier that people have that doesn't allow them to accept a woman being in a role of responsibility unless it's very official.

I've got to a point now where I'm really tired of it in terms of asking or waiting for anybody to notice my work or to listen to the ideas I have and see the value in them. It feels like every space I've been in there's this diminishing, reducing, ignoring, dis-

regarding, and form of invisibility of your skillset.

I might be applauded for being a bass player but not really be applauded for having any kind of brain or anything to say of note. So rather than waiting, I've carved my own space out and I've started my own company where I can be the boss and I know that I won't be treating anyone like that, and I also know that I won't be there waiting for an invitation. I can actually make more of a statement.

If it's a perception of your character you can kind of alter that a bit. You can kind of like get some training, get some positive affirmation stuff going on, learn how to be more assertive and find the correct verbalisations and the correct terms to then impress upon others that you are someone to be trusted, and then you can change that perception of yourself. When it's based on your skin colour, you can't.

You're forever judged no matter what you do, no matter how much training, credentials, skill and that's where it's not equal. All of the discrimination is not equal. Some of the discrimination is something that is so unfair and leaves you feeling so helpless and unable to change a single thing about the perception of yourself, that it's debilitating.

Whenever I have conversations about these things, I do like to acknowledge that we all can suffer from discrimination, but I think it's worth highlighting that when you can't change people's perception by anything you do, then it's up to them to make the change.

[What's coming up in the next few weeks, in the next few months, what are you working on?](#)

My company, The Dawning Cooperation, which is focused on arts and music, is try-

ing to help as many people as we can with programmes and ideas to just give everybody a bit more of a voice, a bit more support and a bit more of a community.

It's a very community oriented non-profit. I've got loads of ideas about how I'm going to be a positive force and influence outside of what I do on stage and what my CV says. That's there and it's great, but it wasn't my past in a way, because I've been out of working for mainstream artists for five years now, since lockdown really.

I didn't go back after the lockdown. And what I've been doing since then is working as an independent musician and now I'm teaching, which I love. I love working with young people because when I look at them, I remember myself at that age, and the idea that people like me coming from the professional world can go back to the colleges and help these young people is fantastic.

I'm also very focused on helping people who are what the recording industry would consider past it, because they've hit 25, far too old now for them, you know? So it's sort of upsetting to think of all these people who are a bit older, 25, 30, 35, 40, whatever, who are not getting any help. So I want to position my company in a place where we can actually offer support to the youth and those that are no longer of interest to business.

YOLANDA LINKS HERE

A woman with dark hair, wearing a dark jacket, is seated and playing a drum set. She is looking upwards and to the right. The background is dark with purple and red stage lighting. A large cymbal is visible behind her. The text is overlaid on the image.

ANNEMIE NEL

THE MELODIC PULSE OF CAPE JAZZ

ANNEMIE NEL ON BREAKING
GROUND AND
FINDING HER BEAT

BY
SHIREEN FISHER

Photo by Gregory Franz



Annemie Nel's journey is one of unconventional mastery. While many jazz greats begin behind the kit in childhood, her foundation was built at Stellenbosch University, where she completed her BMusHons in 2006 as a specialist in piano accompaniment. This melodic beginning informs her drumming today - a style defined by tone color, sensitivity, and a deep understanding of harmonic structure. Nel's discography serves as a roadmap of modern South African jazz evolution. As a preferred collaborator for pianist Ramon Alexander, she has provided the rhythmic pulse for seminal recordings including *Echoes* from Louwskloof and *Picnic* at Kontiki. Her versatility is further showcased through her work with the Lady Day Big Band and the legendary Ibrahim Khalil Shihab.

As a woman who entered a male-dominated field with a "late start" at age 22, she has become more than just a performer; she is a testament to the fact that discipline and "sorting oneself out" as a human being are the true precursors to musical excellence. At 41, she continues to inspire the next generation through her teaching, all while maintaining a rigorous 2026 performance schedule that includes the Montreux Jazz Festival in Franschhoek.

It all started at age eight with formal piano lessons, rooted in a musical family where the art form was cherished even if not practiced professionally. Although piano remained her primary focus through her university honors studies, her teenage years were soundtracked by rock, pop, and a growing desire to play in a band - a creative hunger that led her to experiment with the saxophone and guitar. Despite these explorations, it was the drums that eventually "won" the battle for her musical identity.

‘For some reason, I looked at drums and it was something I just wanted to do,’ she

explains. ‘I tried it one day and it just stuck. During my 2nd year at University I took up Classical percussion, also as a means to get closer to the drums. I quit saxophone at that stage (I am not a wind player...) and guitar was really just a hobby. After completing my final exams, I went to the music shop the very next day and I bought a drum set.’

For those who subscribe to the myth that professional mastery requires starting at age five, Nel's trajectory serves as a profound counter-narrative. Beginning her journey behind the kit at 22, she defied the odds by compressing years of technical development into an intense window of disciplined study. She reflects on how she navigated this high-pressure transition.

‘It was, and still is, a challenging road. The classical percussion training played a tremendous role in laying a technical foundation and creating an awareness of sound and how to approach percussion instruments, and playing in general. I was not lucky enough to have a window of just playing and gigging when I was in my 20s. When I started playing it was also the time when I had to start working in order to earn an income. I couldn't gig yet, because I couldn't play yet... I had to start teaching music. I was extremely disciplined for many years and I really just put in the hours as much as possible while teaching. It was and still is difficult to juggle two career paths simultaneously. But it is possible. I also had amazing guidance from great players like Clement Benny and Ramon Alexander. Attending the Makhandia National Youth Jazz Festival for a couple of years also played a major role in keeping me inspired.’

When Nel first entered the Cape Town jazz scene, she stepped into a role that remains a rarity in a male-dominated field. However, rather than viewing herself as a pioneer "breaking a ceiling", she approached the kit with a singular, craft-oriented focus.

‘I was so focused on just learning to play the instrument that I never felt that way,’ she shares. ‘There were many other female musicians out there who were established and doing their thing for a long time already. I have also been very lucky to have been surrounded by fellow musicians who never viewed me as a "female musician", but who simply respected me as a player and who were very gracious and supportive during those first years. The focus should always be on the music and the craft first and foremost.’

Moving from the strict world of classical music to the creative freedom of jazz required more than just new skills - it required a completely new way of thinking. When asked which classical habit was the hardest to break, Nel highlights the struggle to move past the idea of perfection.

‘Changing the mindset of 'right and wrong.' There is no right or wrong in music. It took

me many years to learn to let go and to also have the confidence to know that whatever I put out is good enough in the moment, regardless of how I feel about it.’

While many drummers focus primarily on rhythm, Nel's history as a pianist gives her a unique, melodic perspective from behind the kit. When asked how her background as a tonal musician changes her approach to the drums, she explains: *‘Melody is always important when playing. The influence of a Classical background, orchestral playing, and playing tonal instruments has definitely played a role in how I approach music and how I listen when I play. I try to prioritise sound and creating tone colour in my playing.’*

Despite her formal classical roots, Nel has become deeply embedded in the "Ghoema" beat - the soulful, rhythmic signature of Cape Town. When asked how she learned to capture that specific "South African swing"

so vital to local heritage, she describes it as a natural evolution of living and listening in the Cape.

'I like to believe that there is a bit of Ghoema in all of us, if you live in Cape Town. It is our heritage and culture, even if you are not a person of color. Working mostly with Ramon, this is the music which I was exposed to a lot when I started playing. I was constantly in these Cape Jazz circles - not necessarily playing, but attending gigs - so this music was in my ears constantly and I guess it just became a part of who I am.'

For nearly two decades, she has served as the rhythmic foundation for Alexander, developing a connection that goes far beyond simple accompaniment. When asked how this long-term partnership has influenced her development and created their intuitive "telepathy" on stage, she elaborates, *'Ramon was the first person who really encouraged me to start playing. He noticed that I was really serious and he basically took me under his wing and taught me all there is to know about Jazz playing. He has probably played the biggest role in shaping my growth over the years. We have been playing together now for about 18 years. By spending so much time together on stage and in rehearsal rooms you really get to know a fellow musician and you build a partnership. We have also made a habit over the years to talk a lot about music. Talking shapes your views and ideas in a most incredible way. This definitely contributed greatly to the end result you will see on stage.'*

Having shared the stage with icons like Ibrahim Khalil Shihab and Jack Momphe, Nel has gained wisdom that extends far beyond technical skill, which she now passes on to her own students. On the life lessons learned from veterans and how teaching influences her own growth, she says: *'The most important advice I've received is that music is never about you - keep at it and never give up. It is such a privilege to*

teach; I learn a tremendous amount from my students and they keep me on my toes. It is inspiring how enthusiastic and committed they are to the craft, and they challenge me to stay a couple of steps ahead continuously.'

Since trading the piano bench for the drum throne, Annemie Nel has become a fixture on the global stage with a career that reads like a travelogue of elite jazz. Her international reach was solidified in 2023 through a tour of Germany and Belgium in partnership with the Hochschule für Musik und Theater, München, performing alongside Martin Zenker and Simangele Mashazi. These global strides are matched by high-profile collaborations, most notably her 2024 performance with world-renowned flautist Hubert Laws for the Desmond Tutu United 4 Humanity Concert. A recurring presence at premier festivals, Nel has graced the stages of the Joy of Jazz, the Namib Desert International Jazz Festival, and the Cape Town International Jazz Festival (2016, 2018, 2025), proving herself a versatile and indispensable force in the contemporary jazz scene.

Whether performing on an intimate local stage or at a massive international festival, Nel maintains that the true impact of a performance isn't measured by the size of the crowd. When asked why the "heart" of the music matters more than the scale of the venue, she emphasises the connection between the performer and the listener: *'A performance is successful when you touch or move someone. Regardless of the gig, venue, or event, this should always be the ultimate goal. We do not make music for ourselves, but for other people - for the audience.'*

In the world of jazz, where personality and improvisation are everything, Nel believes that technical skill is secondary to a musician's sense of self. When asked why self-knowledge carries more weight than raw talent, she offers a perspective that is

as much about life as it is about music.

'Music always reflects the person. It never lies. The better you become at being a human being, the better you will become at playing music. If you know where your place in this world is, you can wholeheartedly invest in your path. Not all of us will become international or even local stars, but we all do have a place that belongs to us. The sooner you discover what that is, the better you can apply yourself and your talents. With a little bit of aptitude and a lot of hard work, anyone can be successful.'

As she looks toward the next generation, Annemie's advice remains grounded in the same humility and self-awareness that defined her own path. *'Aim at sorting yourself out first and always remember that music is never about you.'*

For those looking to experience the drummer's rhythmic storytelling in person, the year ahead is already shaping up to be a busy one. Her upcoming schedule features several high-profile appearances, including a series of exciting events this March. *'I am extremely excited to be part of some events in March, including the Forest Jazz Festival in Knysna, as well as the Montreux Jazz Festival, Franschhoek.'*

[LINKS HERE](#)

Photos by Eddie Adams



KIM CYPHER



**A STORY OF SHEER
DETERMINATION, HARD WORK,
RESILIENCE AND NEVER GIVING
UP ON A DREAM**
By Isabel Marquez

Kim Cypher to close the DEYA Arena at the hugely prestigious Cheltenham Jazz Festival for the 2nd consecutive year!

A Cheltenham girl born and bred, jazz saxophonist, vocalist and composer Kim Cypher celebrated a milestone achievement last year when she performed her debut in the Jazz Arena as part of the main Cheltenham Jazz Festival. 17 years after her initial performance (of many) in the 'Around Town' fringe festival which hosts a variety of free stages, this step up to the main festival marked a milestone achievement for local musicians, being the first time a Cheltenham artist has performed in the main festival.

Kim has a long-standing relationship/history with the festival, having first played the Free Stage back in 2008, then again in 2011 and 2012. Growing up in Cheltenham and being active on the local jazz scene since her teens, Kim and her drummer husband Mike have always been keen supporters of the festival, having seen many of their jazz idols performing there over the years.

Having given up their secure careers in teaching and banking around 15 years ago, the couple set about pursuing life as full-

time professional jazz musicians, as they had been running their music alongside their day jobs for many years.

Cypher released her debut album 'Make Believe' (an album all about following dreams) in 2016, and incorporated a return performance to the festival's Free Stage as part of her album tour in 2017. Then, with a second album 'Love Kim x' in the making, Kim performed as part of the 'Around Town' fringe festival at Harry Cooks in 2018.

Breaking into the London and wider UK jazz scene Kim began to establish herself as one of the leading names in contemporary jazz and a firm favourite at some of the most prestigious jazz clubs in the country. With repeated sellout shows at world-renowned Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club, highly acclaimed albums and a reputation for delivering top class musical entertainment, there was still a dream Kim had her mind set on...



first performance in the festival fringe, she was offered a slot in the main festival, closing the Jazz Arena in 2025.

Firmly flying the flag for all local musicians, this longstanding dream finally came to fruition and Kim performed with her top-class band plus special guest Ashley Slater on trombone. It was quite a local celebration with the Mayor of Cheltenham and the High Sheriff of Gloucestershire in attendance. Her fourth album 'LIVE and Smiling' features some of the tracks performed live at the festival last year. The album is available on limited edition vinyl.

"Finally, Kim Cypher played her home gig at Cheltenham Jazz Festival in the Jazz Arena. Lovely to see her and her band delight a packed crowd. Brava!"

Charlie Chan – official photographer at the festival

"The home-town crowd went crazy, and this truly was a triumphant home-town show for Cheltenham based saxophonist, composer and vocalist Kim Cypher" The Jazz Mann

performing as part of the main festival in her beloved hometown of Cheltenham. After all, Cheltenham is where she grew up, where she currently lives and where she is very much part of the local jazz community. Although it is nice to spread your wings and perform for a wider audience, home is where the heart is and it is often the case that local musicians are overlooked in their own local areas.

In 2024, with her third album 'Catching Moments' due for release, Kim was asked to do a live interview at the Jazz Festival by Jazz FM's David Freeman. Despite not being part of the festival, her name and reputation was strongly enough associated with the Cheltenham jazz scene to be included in the excitement around the festival.

Then, much to Kim's delight, after many years of conversations, 17 years after her

With that dream finally realised after years of determination and never giving up, it came as a wonderful surprise to Kim to be invited back again this year to close the spectacular DEYA Arena. With a capacity of 900 this year, this is more than a dream come true...it reflects possibilities and achievement gained through continued hard work, sheer determination and following a dream that you never lose sight of and never give up on.

This is a major milestone for musicians to be celebrated within their local communities. In the words of Kim Cypher:

“To be celebrated in my hometown means the absolute world to me. Never give up on your dreams folks!”

Kim performs her brand-new 'Funky Latin Jazz Party' together with her band featuring Ashley Slater once again at 6.30pm on bank holiday Monday 4th May. Tickets have just been released on 4th March [CLICK HERE](#)

“Our histories never unfold in isolation. We cannot truly tell what we consider to be our own histories without knowing the other stories. And often we discover that those other stories are actually our own stories.” Angela Y. Davis

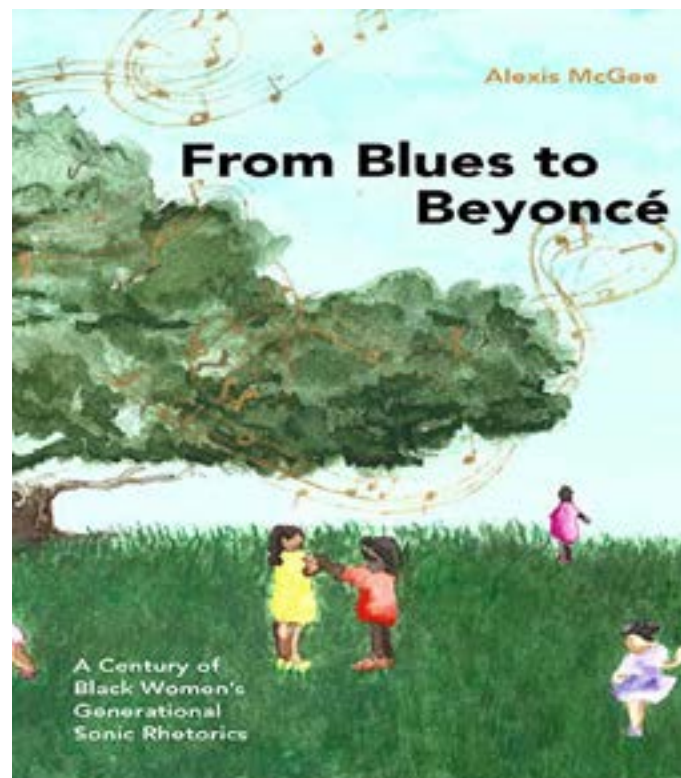
WHEN WILL IT BE TIME?

The last words the singer/songwriter/actress/activist and playwright **Sandra Booker** (and member of our WIJM team) said to me, before she sadly passed away last year, was ‘thank you’. She said ‘thank you for hearing me. No one has ever heard me’. I was mortified. Mortified that anyone would feel the need to thank anyone for simply listening. But this is how she felt. Unheard. Unseen. Sandra, a Black American woman, from New Orleans, was a fierce advocate for women’s rights and spent her entire life fighting for a space to be heard, challenging those who she felt did not respect her, those who did not listen. During the last few years of her life, yes, she publicly outed people on social media and ruffled some feathers, but she was speaking her truth and had just had enough of the constant racism, the constant sexism and the battles she had been fighting her entire life. We first met online two years ago when she commented on a social media post promoting a playlist of 13 women, of which only one was a woman of colour. She simply said ‘we are always ignored’. I did not ignore her. I listened. I should not be thanked for that. We should all be listening.

I refuse to live in a world where women of colour feel the need to thank white people for hearing them.

Since the beginning of colonialism, women of colour have been sidelined, ignored, silenced. Their voices are still being erased. and they are still fighting for recognition.

With an unconscionable number of examples that could be mentioned, I look to the books on the WIJM bookcase. In the 2023 ‘Hidden Harmonies: Women and Music in Popular Entertainment’ book (edited by Paula J Bishop and Kendra Preston Leonard, University Press of Mississippi) **Dr Tammy Kernodle**, explores the under representation of Black women’s voices in the March on Washington in her brilliant essay ‘Come Go with Me to Freedom Land: Black Women Musicians and the Unexplored Sonic History of the March on Washington’ ‘public memory and the history of the event has been sanitized and the role of Black women musicians played in advancing the political goals of



the march and the movement have been glossed over’

In **Alexis McGee’s** outstanding 2024 book ‘From Blues to Beyoncé: A Century of Black Women’s Generational Sonic Rhetorics’ (State University of New York Press), she tells us it is ‘inspired by the overwhelming accounts of Black women who are often not credited or heard but still go on manoeuvring daily life—with or

without recognition. It’s inspired by the countless Black women who have had their stories and struggles pushed aside and discounted, by the everyday attempts to survive in an anti-Black world. It’s not just about individual figures (like **Toni Morrison; Lauryn Hill; Nina Simone; Megan Thee Stallion; Ida B. Wells;** etc. that I mention in the book) that serve as the foundation to this work, but it is also about the everyday examples of creative ingenuity ordinary Black women exude when we move forward in the world. In my opinion, that is not showcased enough; I wanted to celebrate that and celebrate us.’

In David Sheff ‘Yoko: A biography’ (2025, Simon & Schuster UK) he discussed the lack of credit for **Yoko’s** work on John Lennons’ ‘Imagine’ in 1971, receiving a credit 46 years later, in 2017. Lennon stated in 1980 ‘it should be credited as a Lennon-Ono song because a lot of it came from Yoko. But in those days, I was a bit more selfish, a bit more macho, and I sort of omitted to mention her contribution.’

‘Bésame Mucho’, the most recorded and covered Spanish-language song of all time, first released in 1941 and then recorded by The Beatles, Frank Sinatra, Nat King Cole, Plácido Domingo, Dean Martin, was actually written by **Consuelo Velázquez**, a legend in Mexico, but rarely referenced globally. Paul McCartney originally referenced it as song by The Coasters, no mention of Consuelo Velázquez. (Christine Barrett-Feldman’s A Women’s History of the Beatles, 2021, Bloomsbury Academic)

But what about in the jazz world?

Throughout the world, even the most fervent of Jazz haters, have heard of Louis Armstrong, but do they know his second wife **Lil Hardin**? Her contribution as a pianist, composer, arranger, bandleader and organizer of his career has constantly been under played.

Maxine Gordon, in her inspiring liner notes for the ‘Queen of The Organ’ **Shirley Scott’s**, ‘One For Me’ album, explains ‘We often talked about how she had been told what to play, what to wear, how to look, how to



speak in public for years and years. She had to play the foot pedals on the organ with high heels and have hot spotlights shine on her feet. She was tired of it all.’

Vi Redd, Tiny Davis, Lovie Austin, Valaida Snow, Peggy Gilbert, Una Mae Carlisle, Ginger Smock, Mata Ray, Nina Russell, Clara Bryant, Mable Lee, Bertha Hope Booker, Melba Liston, Maxine Sullivan, Velma Middleton – have you heard of any of these women? **Vi Burnside, Carlene Ray, Pauline Braddy, Irene Higginbotham, Neliska Ann Briscoe, Dorothy Ashby, Bobbi Humphrey, Graciela Pérez-Gutierrez, Toshiko Akiyoshi, Helen Jones Wood, Blanche Calloway**...the list goes on and on and on and on...

Perhaps you are thinking, but this is ‘back in the day’. Things have changed, women of colour are empowered now, they are everywhere, they are platformed, they are heard. I have had those conversations with many men (women, in my experience never



Photo by Tori Wright

say this). I have even had conversations in the UK, where some people believe there is no racism in the UK and that it's 'a US issue' with Trump and his unspeakably hideous regime re-igniting white supremacy.

Saxophonist, composer, and vocalist **Camille Thurman** has many accolades. Two-time winner of the ASCAP Herb Alpert Young Jazz Composers Award, Downbeat Magazine's Critics Poll Nominee for Rising Star Tenor Saxophonist and Vocalist and Rising New Artist (2020-2025), a Grammy Award winning recording artist, and she was the first trailblazing woman in 30 years contracted to perform, tour, and record (6 albums) for two entire seasons as a full-time member with the world-renowned Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis (2018-2020). And yet, last year, when Camille made her debut at the world-renowned Ronnie Scott's, she

was introduced simply as 'one of many artists making their debut that week,' with no reference to her many achievements. A recent article celebrating the first woman to work at the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra states it is another woman (white), with no mention of Camille at all. There is no justifiable reason to omit Camille's historic role and contribution to the history of the orchestra as the first woman from the article.

When Camille was interviewed by Downbeat discussing her groundbreaking role in 2022, she told them:

'At my first concert with them, I couldn't help but think about all the great women — The International Sweethearts of Rhythm, **Vi Burnside**, **Vi Redd** — who came before me, who were doing this and were left out of the history books. Then I felt like it was not just a celebration for me, but for them, too. But what was really humbling was hearing from young women, educators, from older women — and from men, too — that just seeing a woman up there spoke so profoundly to them. Especially for the young girls. For them it was, like, "Wow — I could see myself up there — that's a possibility."

And yet, 6 years later, Camille is not even referenced in this new article, a modern-



day example of erasure via rewriting the narrative. Why not mention her? How many women of colour are contributing to Jazz publications across the world as journalists or editors? How many photographers? Jazz journalism remains dominated by white men. Willard Jenkins brilliant 2022 book 'Ain't But A Few of Us' (Duke University Press Books) gives a much needed platform to Black male and female journalists 'despite the fact that most of jazz's major innovators and performers have been African American, the overwhelming majority of jazz journalists, critics and authors have been and continue to be white men. No major mainstream jazz publication has ever had a Black editor or publisher.' In the UK, founded by Jemella Ukaegbu in December 2017, the UK Black Female Photography collective is powerful, award-winning community of Black female photographers in the UK with over 600 photographers. Have you heard of any of them? Maybe some. Do you see any of their work in Jazz publications or on the wall at a venue? No.

What do you see when you read a Jazz publication or go to a gig?

Isabel Marquez and I reached out to the community and spoke to a wide range of women of colour of all ages in the UK and the US to listen to their experiences. We are grateful to the women who opened up to us and shared their experiences. Although some were happy to have their names included, some were not, for fear of consequences, afraid of losing gigs and being criticized for speaking out so we are anonymising them all.

'At that level, somewhere like the Lincoln Center, you would expect, we're in the arts and a lot of modern art in terms of music comes from Black culture, whether it's African, African-American, Caribbean, a lot of modern pop, Western music comes from Black skin, Black lives, Black countries

with majority Blacks and it's so ridiculous that that can even happen in a space where the music is coming from African heritage.'

'I feel paranoid and unwelcome. Working in an all-girl band I was expecting to feel welcomed and supported, but I was the only woman of colour and constantly singled out. I had to fight for everything. I was the only woman who had to audition, everyone else was given custom in ear monitors except me and I felt like I was in the cast of Mean Girls. It was clear I was just hired to be in the diversity chair'

'It's a real problem and it shows up in instances like this with a woman being in a space and being ignored. It can be through race, it can be through gender, and it can be through being perceived as powerless. We do this stuff to each other across the board in society'

'When it's around race, it feels the same individually but societally it has a different kind of impact. It's not that it's to downplay other people's suffering when they go through similar things but it's just that when an individual is ignored it's because of a perception of their character not because of their skin colour.'

'after the day of protests (in the UK) my husband insisted on coming to pick me up after my gigs, because he feared for my safety. I am a fiercely independent woman, but I have to admit, I was grateful.'

*'I am always asked 'where are you from?' It's so tiresome. My reply? I'm British mother****. '*

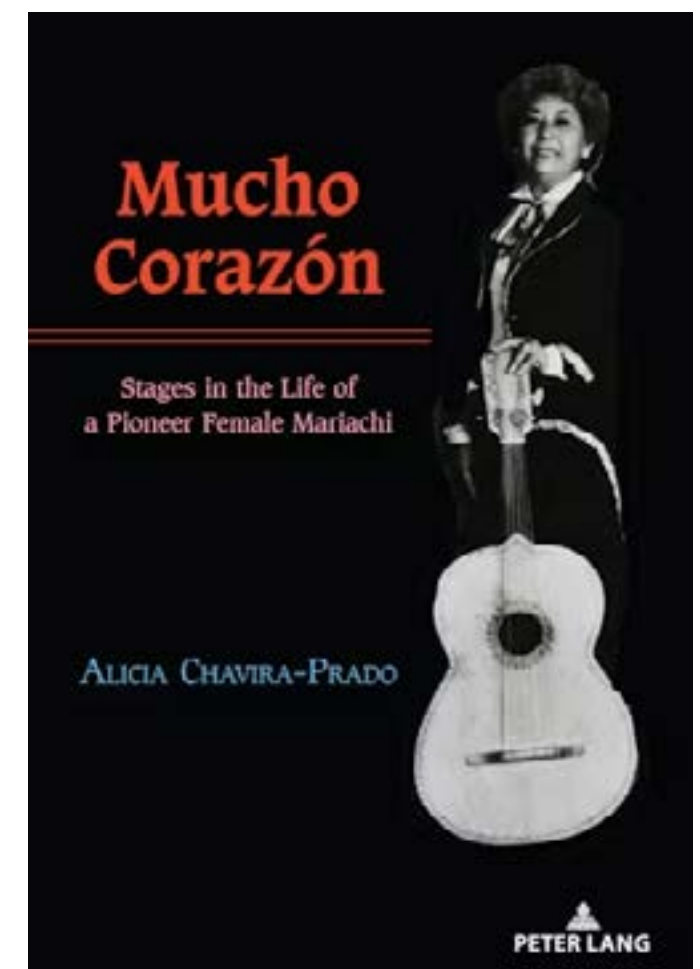
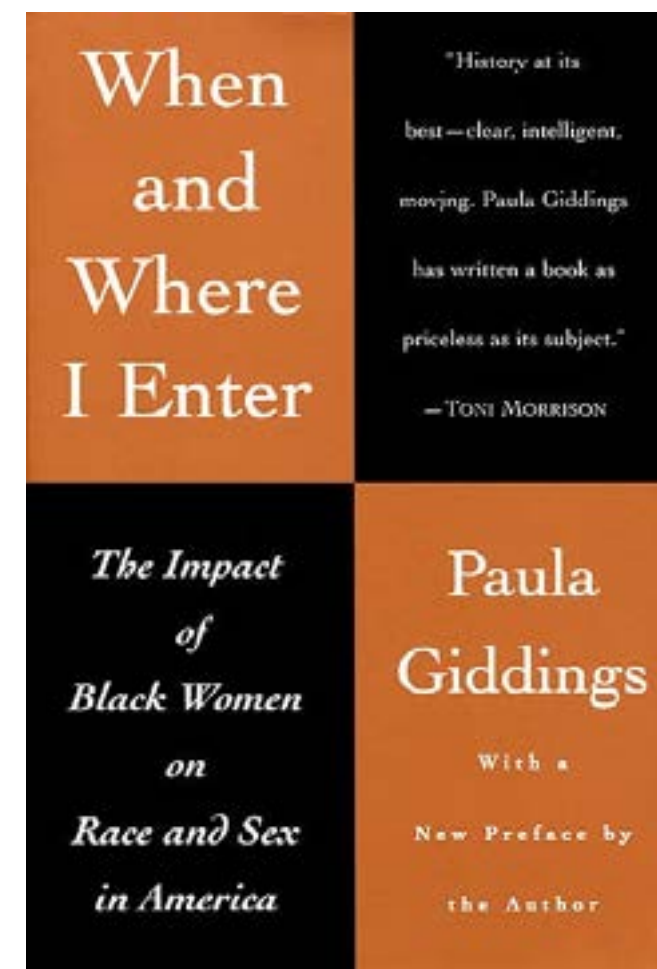
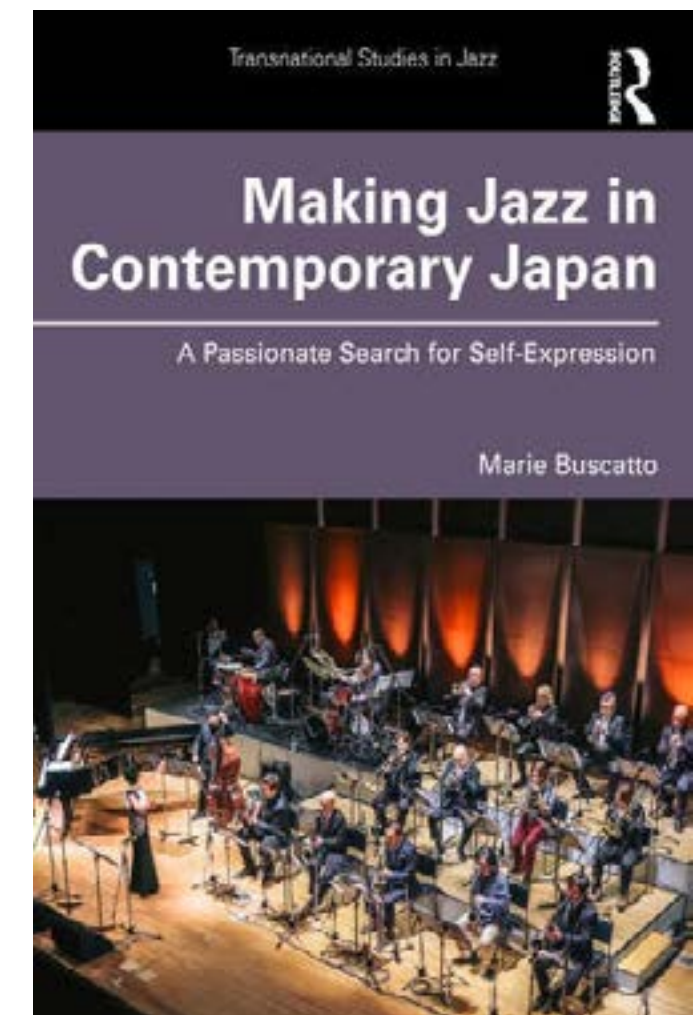
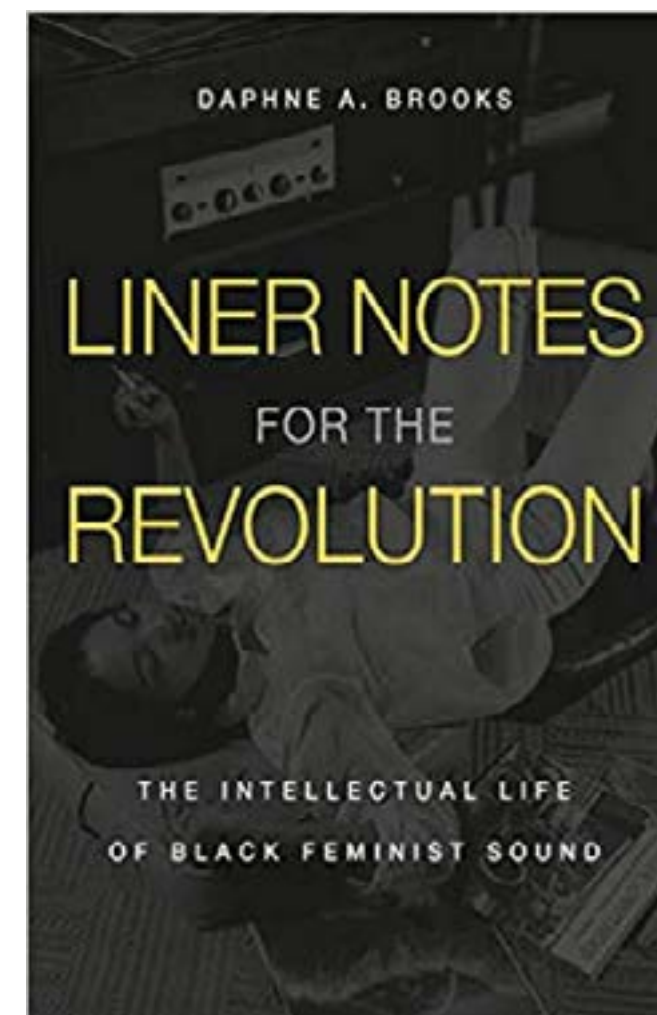
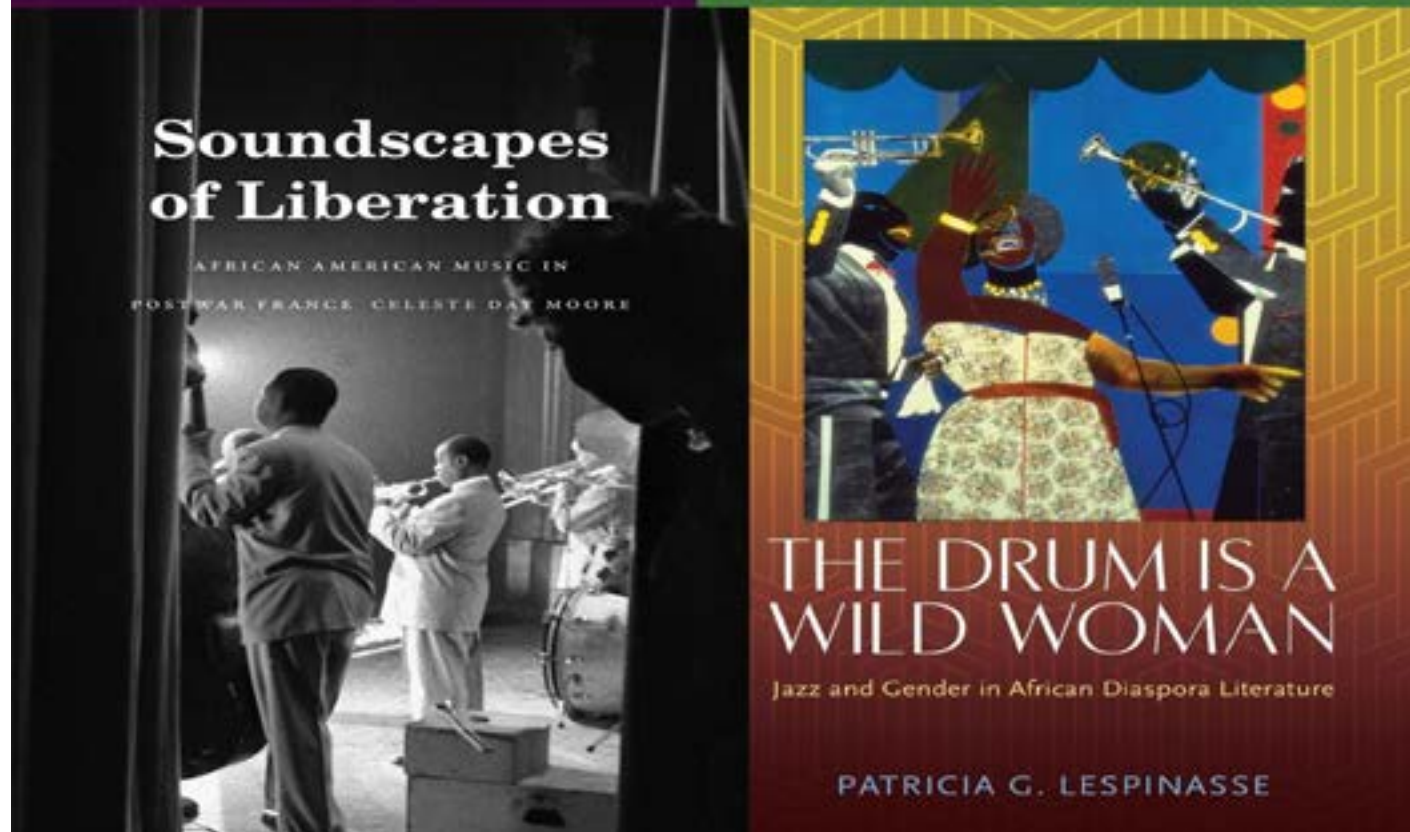
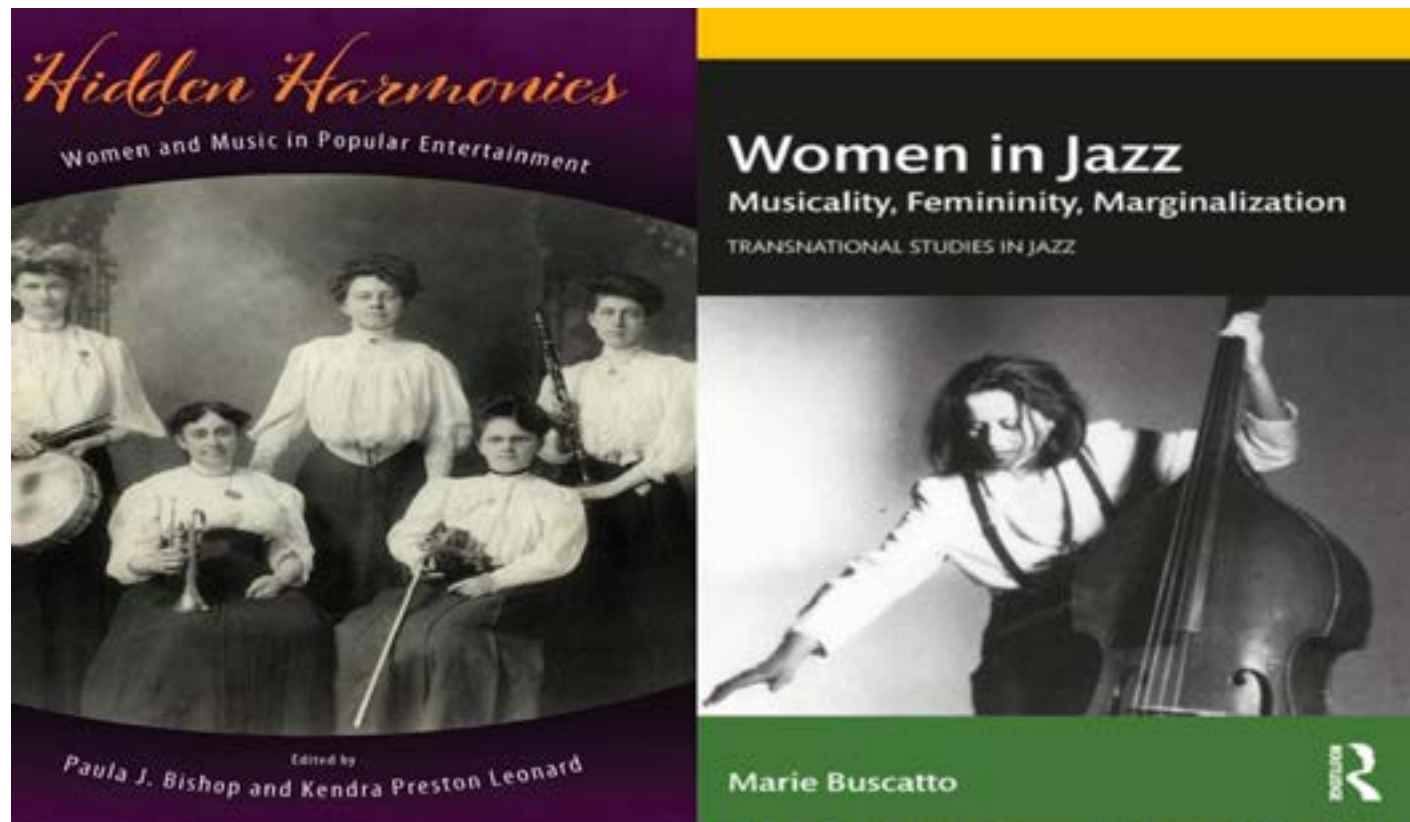
'People often assume I am an assistant. I'm standing there carrying my instrument and the presumption is that I am holding it for someone, not that it is mine'

'I think it's just the world we live in and I just try to find joy and not let this get me

down. it happens all the time. And I guess for me, I do see these things, but I have to keep it moving. This world takes enough. I'm a black woman in this world, so I'm already dealing with that. I'm not going to let you take my joy, you can't have everything! ‘

So, when is it time for women of colour to be heard?
The time is and always has been NOW.

by Fiona Ross with a special thanks to Isabel Marquez





ALMA MIĆIĆ

Photos by Jose Gonzalez

ALMA MIĆIĆ

LILAC WINE

Photos by Jose Gonzalez

American vocalist Helen Merrill, is sadly often left out of the conversation when exploring legendary jazz vocalists. She performed and recorded with legends throughout her career including Charlie Parker, Earl Hines, Bud Powell, Ron Carter, Gil Evans, Quincy Jones and Clifford Brown, and released over 30 albums as leader or co -leader. **Alma Mićić's** latest album Lilac Wine is dedicated to Helen Merrill & Clifford Brown, and gifts us with a well overdue reminder not only of Helen's work, but beautifully showcases Alma's work as vocalist.

Born and raised in Belgrade, Serbia, **Alma Mićić** moved to the United States to study at Berklee, and since making the US her home has released five critically acclaimed albums. Lilac Wine Alma's recent and sixth album, features Eric Alexander and was recorded at the legendary Van Gelder Studio.

With so many wonderful legendary vocalists in the jazz scene, Helen Merrill is not a singer that is often spoken about. What was it about her work that drew you to her and to create this album?

I knew her work before, but I had the pleasure of meeting her and doing an event with her some years ago, here in the Bronx where I live with my husband and kids. This wonderful organisation that is run by Elena Martinez and the famous percussionist Bobby Sanabria, invited me to participate in a series called Women in Jazz. It was a series that featured artists from the Bronx or that live in the Bronx and Helen was born

and raised in the Bronx. She was also a child of Croatian immigrants, which is the part of the world that I'm from, so we hit it off right away. I met her granddaughter, who's a very talented photographer, Laura Merrill, and we all just hung out for the whole day. There was a concert, and Helen spoke about her achievements and the event was really about honouring her. Some years passed and I started getting more into her discography and I discovered some really mind-blowing records that she did, because she was recording so actively over a very long period of time.

I really got into some of her arrangements and the song [Lilac Wine](#) featured on two different albums, one she recorded back in the 1950s and then she re-recorded it in the 2000s. (Lilac Wine, 2002 and Helen Merrill with Strings, 1955) The sensibility is the same, but two vastly different versions of the same song. I was just very inspired by them and I had this idea that I brought to my producer Tetsuo Hara and asked him what he thought about doing a tribute album. He's a huge fan of Helen's and has a lot of knowledge, so together we selected the songs. It was sort of a conceptual album for me to sort of explore her body of work, and she also has that legendary recording with Clifford Brown (Helen Merrill with Clifford Brown arr. by Quincy Jones, 1955). Tetsuo Hara suggested because I was working with Eric Alexander at the time that we do a sort of an homage and have Eric equally featured in the record as a way to honour that legendary record.





daunting task, to create a tribute album to such an amazing vocalist. How did you approach that?

I was very excited about it honestly, because I felt confident that I could do the project justice and I could honour her. The band is incredible, top musicians from the East Coast and on the world jazz scene. I find we have similarity in the sentiment and the emotion, maybe because we're from the same part of the world. Sometimes people have a similar timbre or similar features that come with a certain part of geographical belonging. But I just could feel connected to her emotion and the way she expresses herself when she sings. I found something that I could really relate to and that I could maybe emulate in some way, in my own artistic expression.

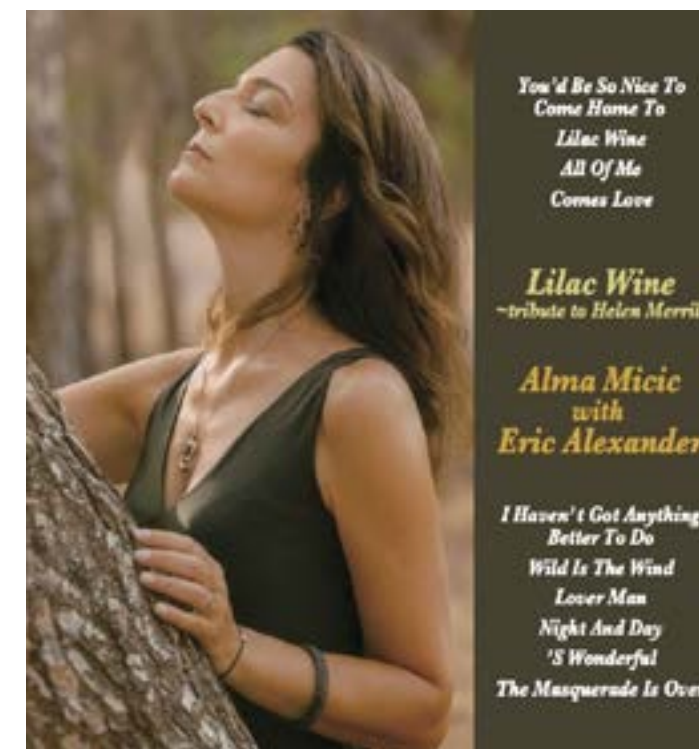
I was really excited to explore the repertoire and to choose the songs and it was a close collaboration with my producer Tetsuo Hara. We went back and forth with suggestions because he has such a vast knowledge of her discography. He already knew everything.

I went with songs that I have known for a long time in my own repertoire that I've always liked, but never recorded. So, for example, You'd Be So Nice To Come Home Too, which is a song I've performed, with my husband, on so many different occasions - concerts, events – it's a sort of an opener for me and one of those songs that is usually the first of three songs that I start with. Helen has a gorgeous version of that standard as well. Then I went to some that I have never performed anywhere, not even in my house until I decided to do this project. And one of them was Lilac Wine, which was the song that inspired the whole record really. I think it was when I heard that song and I heard her version of it that I wanted to do a whole album of Helen songs. That song touched me very deeply. I know there's many versions of

that song - Nina Simone has a wonderful, moving version and also Jeff Buckley, who is not a jazz artist, had a beautiful version. So, it's a well-known song, but it's also not so well known! Also Wild Is the Wind that everybody knows, she recorded on her record that's called Lilac Wine with beautiful, lush strings, just an inspiring version and because of that I decided to also interpret the song. And that song, I think is maybe even one of the best tracks of the album in my opinion and I've heard from people that they love it. So, the album went between songs that I knew very well to songs that I didn't know at all – a wide variety.

With the songs you already had in your repertoire, as a vocalist, how did you work on creating a sound that was respecting Helen but keeping your own uniqueness?

I don't think I did it differently than what I did before, to be honest with you. I really have been singing these songs for a very long time. When I heard Helen's versions, there was a lot of similarity to what I was already doing but also those 'aha' moments. There's a common sensitivity that I could relate to. So, what I've been doing this whole time is exactly how I would like to



honour her, you know? So, whether it was conscious or subconscious it didn't really wander too far from how I would have already interpreted it. I had the songs as my own because I performed them for so many years as part of my repertoire.

I don't know what it is, but there is something that attracts me to her sound. It's almost like when she sings it makes you a little bit nervous sometimes. There's this cliffhanger quality in her singing, but there's also warmth and there's romance, but also at the same time, a lot of heartbreak. In our culture, I feel like every single song we sing in the folklore tradition has all those things - the cliffhangers, the warmth, the broken heart and the hopefulness as well. So, I felt like I could really draw on that as an inspiration.

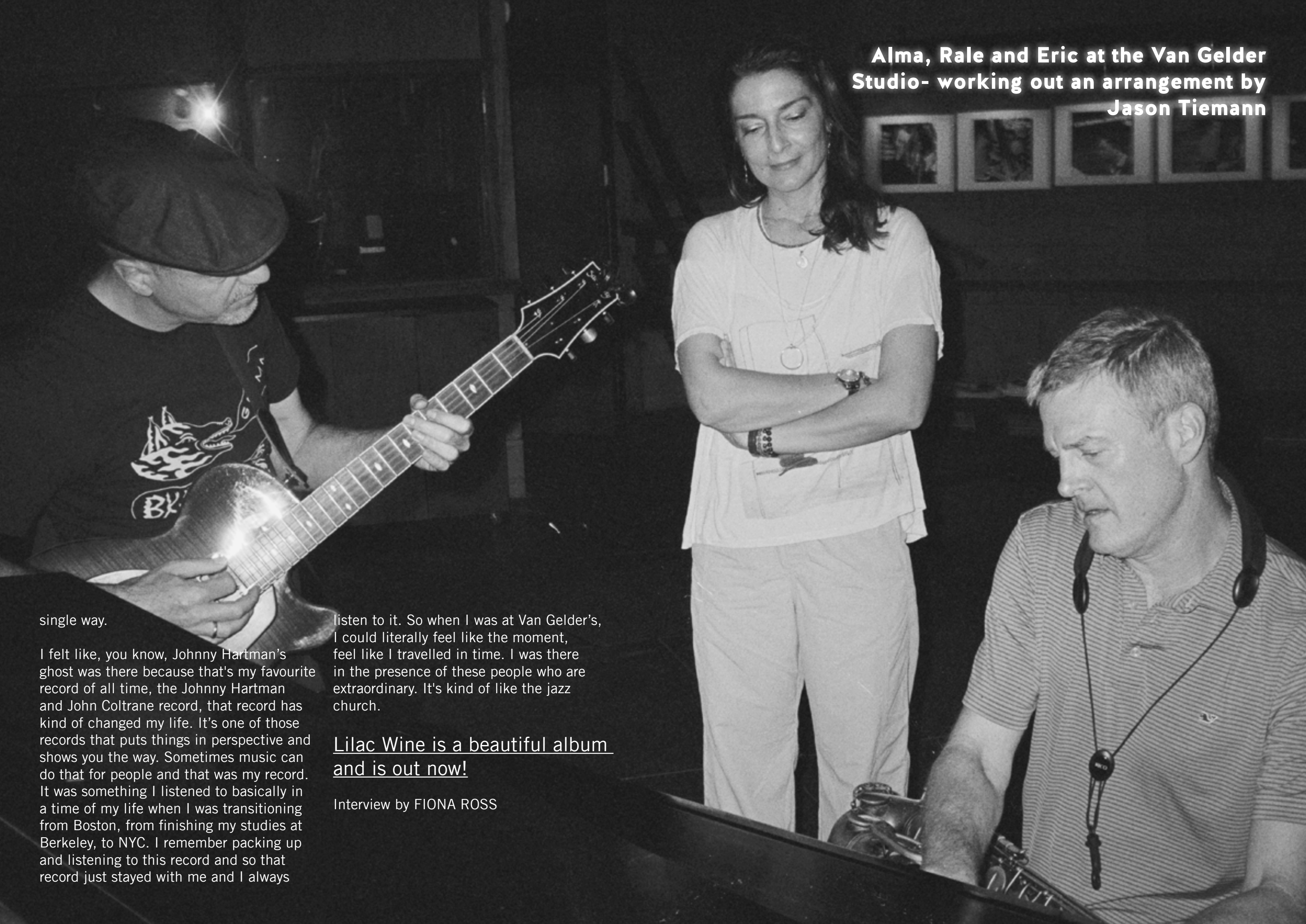
You recorded the album at the legendary Van Gelder Studio. That must have been amazing!

I'll tell you, it's quite a story. So, the first time ever I was at Rudy Van Gelders' studio was when Eric Alexander invited me to be a featured vocalist on his Timing Is Everything album, which came out in 2023-2024. It was sort of a last-minute thing, and he says 'I want you to sing Evergreen, the famous Barbra Streisand song, here's the arrangement. Can you do it? It is going to be one take.' So we went to the studio and I remember it was Easter morning and we went to the studio for the first time and, you know, I'm going around, taking the photos and meeting the wonderful people who run the studio, Maureen and Don Sickler, who are just angels and masters of their art and we kind of hit it off. And so, after I recorded that one take, I said, I would really love to record my next record here and they said, just let us know when you're ready. So, I did 'You're My Thrill', which was my first record for Venus in 2024. I recorded there and now this is my second album at the studio and there's

Why do you think that she is not as well-known as some of the other legendary vocalists?

I think maybe because she spent a large portion of her career in Japan and that's why she wasn't as present here in the American scene. But she is hugely respected and admired throughout the world. Sometimes, things are different in the home country, compared to the rest of the world, but I think people know who she is. Maybe it was never like that level of stardom that was achieved like with of course Ella, Billie and Sarah, but you know, there are many other singers that people don't know enough about. It's just a matter of doing your due diligence and checking out all the singers if you love vocal jazz.

It's a really beautiful tribute to her and reminds people of her work. But also for you, I imagine, as a vocalist, quite a



Alma, Rale and Eric at the Van Gelder Studio- working out an arrangement by Jason Tiemann

single way.

I felt like, you know, Johnny Hartman's ghost was there because that's my favourite record of all time, the Johnny Hartman and John Coltrane record, that record has kind of changed my life. It's one of those records that puts things in perspective and shows you the way. Sometimes music can do that for people and that was my record. It was something I listened to basically in a time of my life when I was transitioning from Boston, from finishing my studies at Berkeley, to NYC. I remember packing up and listening to this record and so that record just stayed with me and I always

listen to it. So when I was at Van Gelder's, I could literally feel like the moment, feel like I travelled in time. I was there in the presence of these people who are extraordinary. It's kind of like the jazz church.

Lilac Wine is a beautiful album and is out now!

Interview by FIONA ROSS

BEHIND THE LENS

THE
PHOTOGRAPHERS

ENID FARBER

Miki Yamanaka, provided the music with a solo piano performance during the first morning of the 2026 Jazz Congress, while attendees mingled in the Mica and Ahmet Ertegun Atrium, at Jazz at Lincoln Center.





Left: Pianist Amina Claudine Myers during the panel, "Jazz Legacies Fellowship" Led by esteemed Jazz Journalist, Willard Jenkins at the 2026 Jazz Congress at JALC (Jazz at Lincoln Center). The panel included five of the fellows (from the inaugural class of the Jazz Legacies Fellowship, launched by the Mellon Foundation in partnership with the Jazz Foundation of America in 2025, including Bertha Hope, Reggie Workman, Carmen Lundy and Herlin Riley.



Vocalist Carmen Lundy straight talking about the good and the bad trials of being a woman in jazz, during the panel, "Jazz Legacies Fellowship" led by esteemed Jazz Journalist, Willard Jenkins at the 2026 Jazz Congress at Jazz at Lincoln Center.

Panelists: Angelika Beener and Caroline Davis, clapping to Terri Lyne Carrington who led the panel: "Jazz Now: Evolving the Tradition" during the 2026 Jazz Congress at Jazz at Lincoln Center

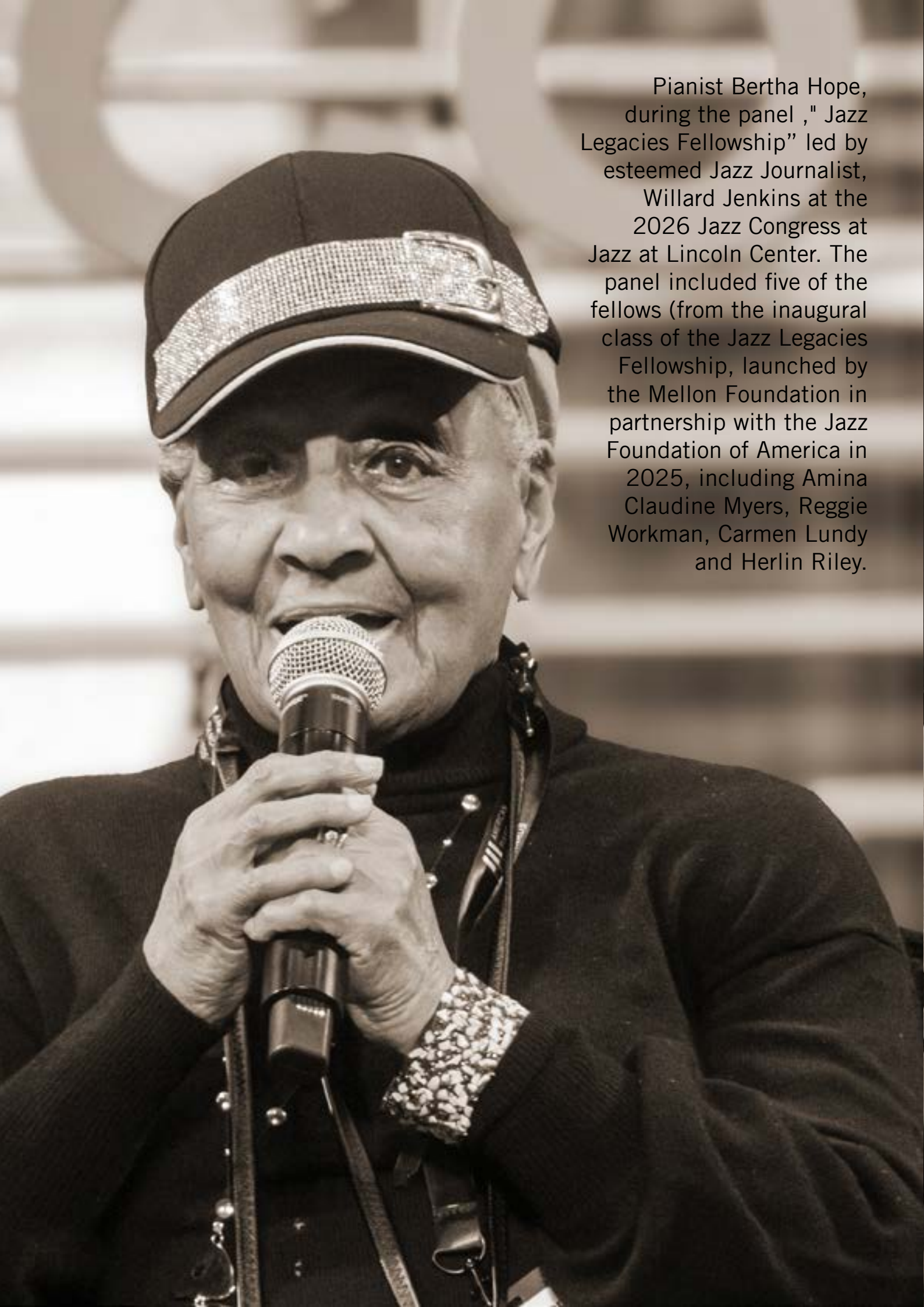


Singer Deirdre Jennings-Holton at Mr. Henry's, in Washington DC.. Her rendition of Bob Marley's Redemption Song was joyous and poignant and deeply moved me!



Brooklyn's Brass Queens entertained the crowd of attendees at the 2026 Jazz Congress, during the cocktail party at the end of day one.





Pianist Bertha Hope, during the panel, "Jazz Legacies Fellowship" led by esteemed Jazz Journalist, Willard Jenkins at the 2026 Jazz Congress at Jazz at Lincoln Center. The panel included five of the fellows (from the inaugural class of the Jazz Legacies Fellowship, launched by the Mellon Foundation in partnership with the Jazz Foundation of America in 2025, including Amina Claudine Myers, Reggie Workman, Carmen Lundy and Herlin Riley.



Teri Lynne Carrington. moderated the panel, "Jazz Now: Evolving the Tradition", during the 2026 Jazz Congress at Jazz at Lincoln Center. The panel included Milestones podcaster, Angelika Beener; Saxophonist and Flautist, Caroline Davis; Trumpeter, Keyon Harrold and Saxophonist, Logan Richardson.

A woman with dark hair in a bun and glasses, wearing a dark blue kimono with a butterfly pattern, is seated at a piano. She is looking down at the keys. The background shows a blurred cityscape with many windows.

Miki Yamanaka, provided the music with a solo piano performance during the first morning of the 2026 Jazz Congress, while attendees mingled in the Mica and Ahmet Ertegun Atrium, at Jazz at Lincoln Center.

A woman with short, light-colored hair and large black-rimmed glasses is holding a microphone. She is wearing a dark jacket over a light-colored top. She has a serious expression on her face.

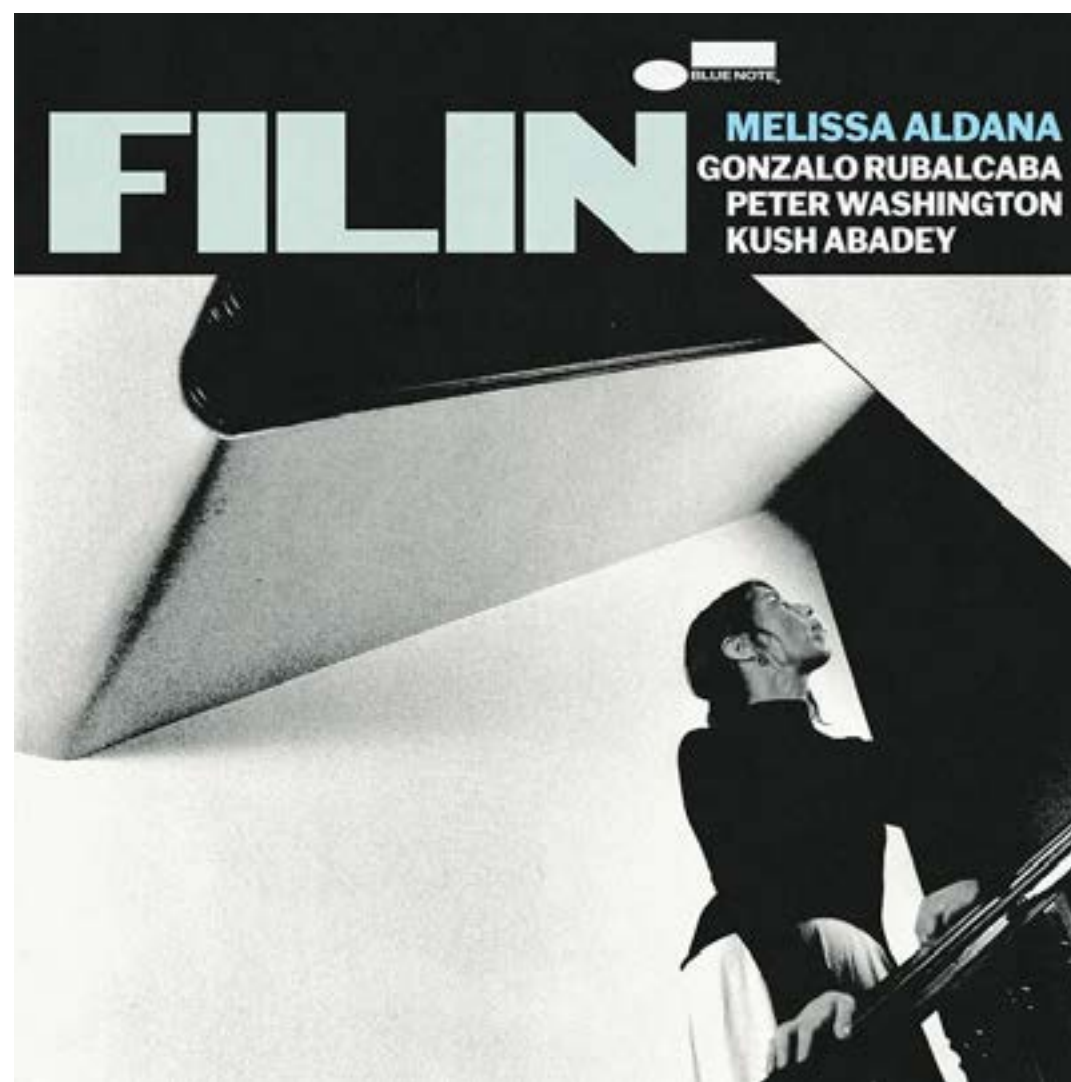
Vocalist Nora McCarthy "Music", performing at Rutgers University Clement's Place in Newark, NJ with her band which includes her husband, saxophonist Jorge Sylvester. The two are a special unit on and off the stage!

NEW RELEASES

Cherise by Monika S Jakubowska



SARA COLMAN
REBECCA NASH



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...
STICKS AND THRONES
ON THE BOOKCASE
KICKING DOWN THE DOOR



ON THE BOOKCASE

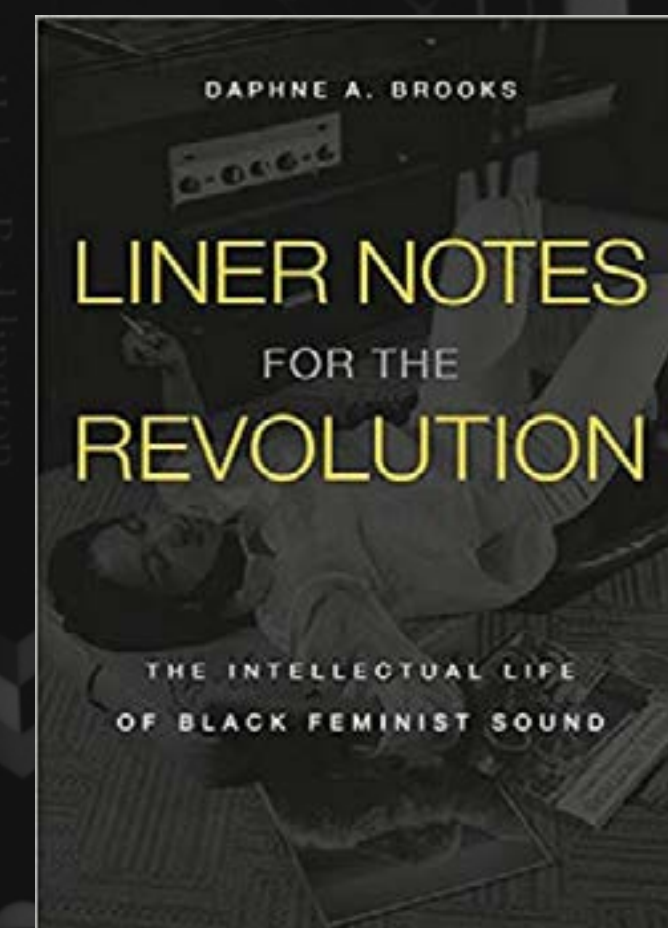
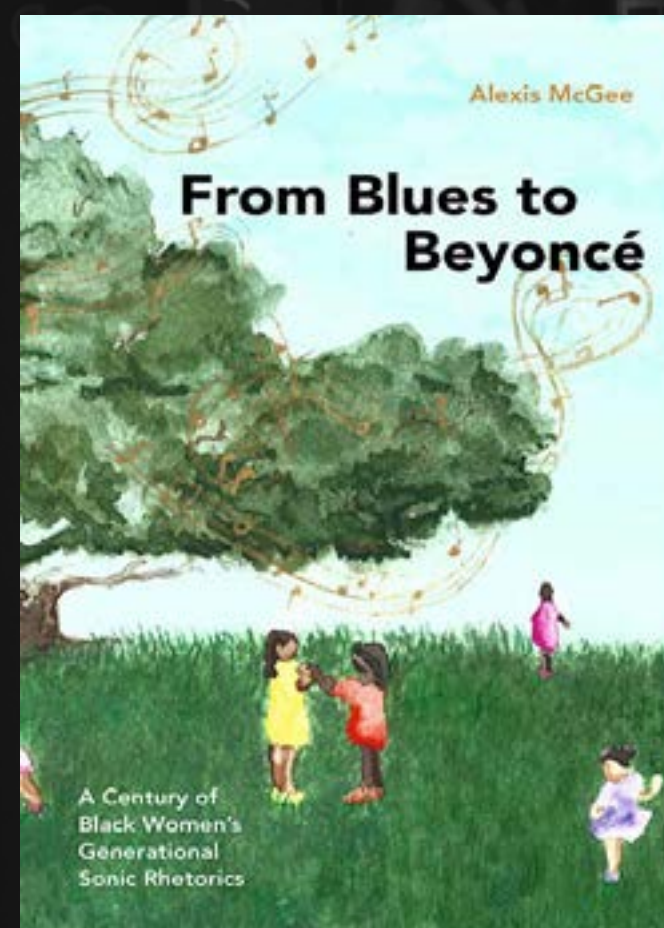
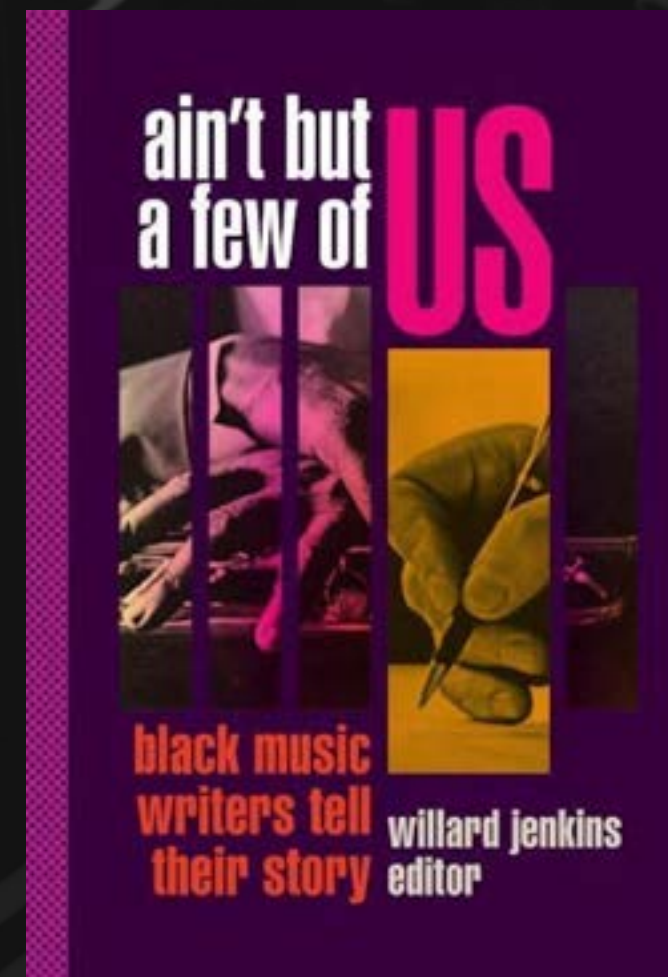
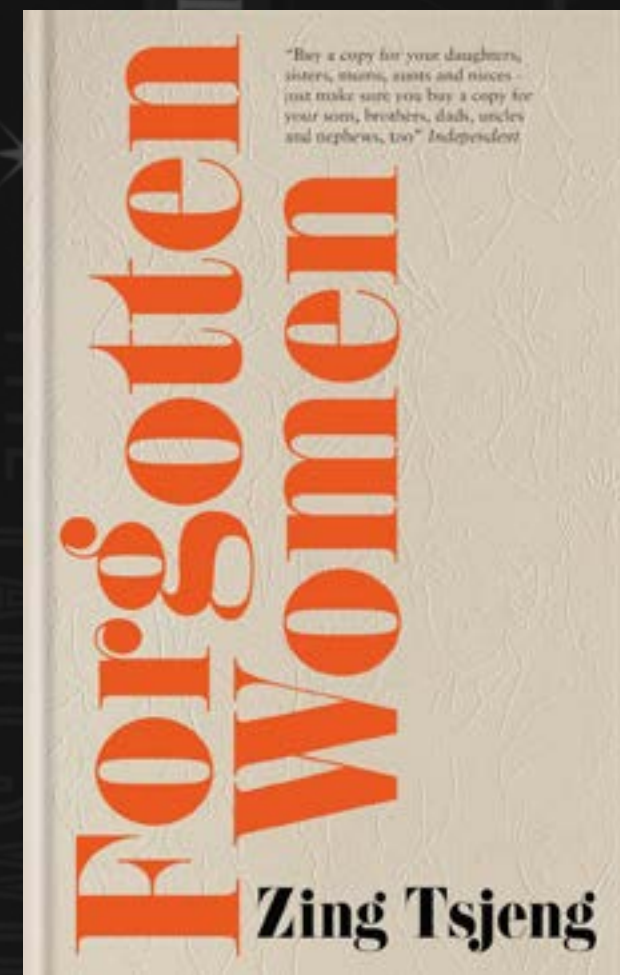


The Women In Jazz Media bookcase is all about platforming female authors from across the world. With over 100 books, all the books included on our bookcase are also on our physical bookcase and we are very happy to share them with you all.

Our On The Bookcase podcast series explores some of the books on our bookcase and we love speaking to authors about their work. Our guests so far have been:

Jordannah Elizabeth
Maria Golia
Dr Tammy Kernodle
Monika Herzig
Paulette Jackson
Dr Joan Cartwright
Tish Oney
Maxine Gordon
Stephanie Stein Crease
Arlette Hovinga
Judith Tick
Dr Alexis McGee

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ON THE Women in Jazz Media PLAYLIST



Salin 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 life-time contributions to the jazz music and jazz radio community.

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

CLICK ON THE ALBUM COVERS TO
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ARTIST!

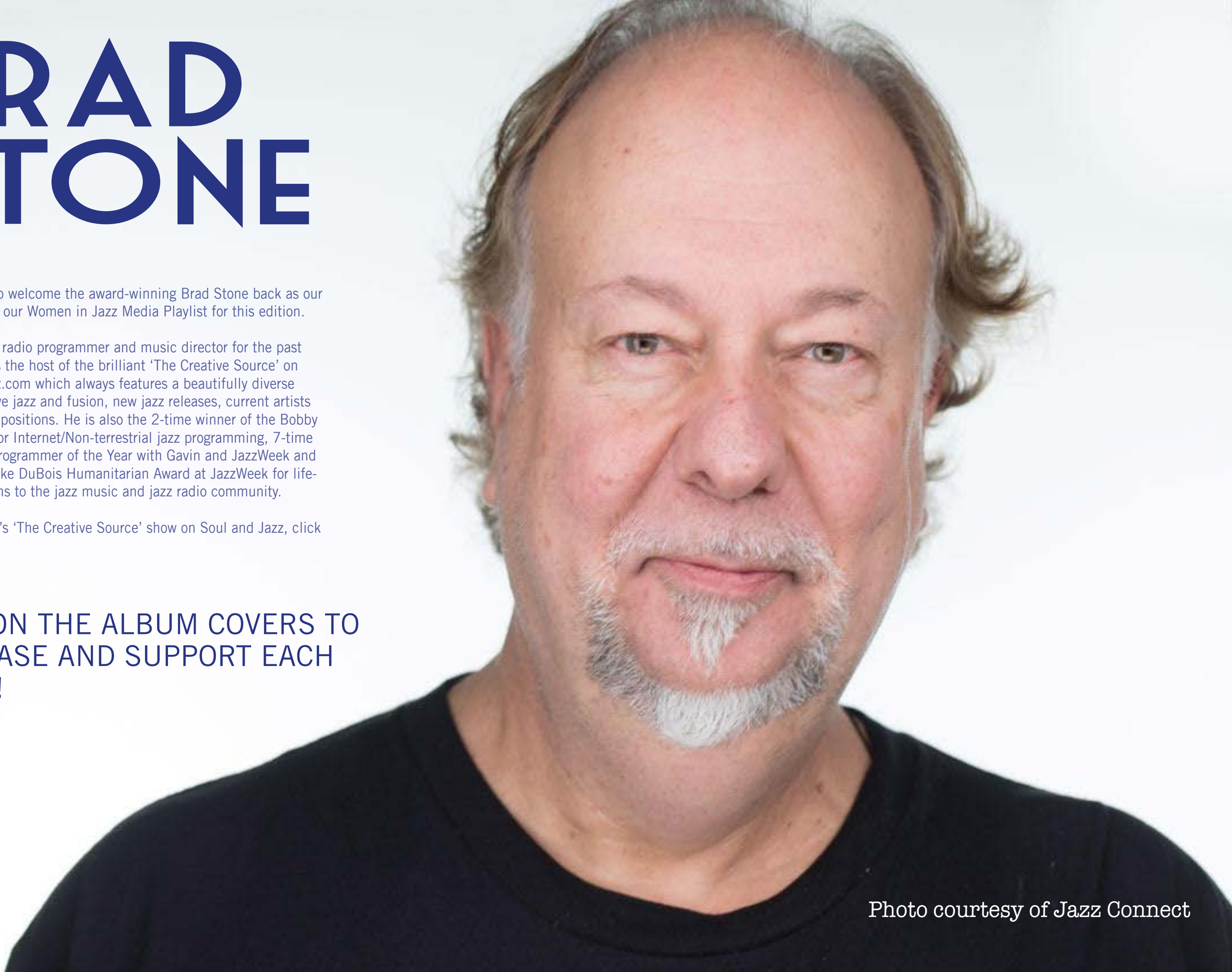


Photo courtesy of Jazz Connect

Aretha Tillotson
Kinda Out West
Bent River Records
2025

The title of this album refers to the Western Canadian roots of this band. Bassist Aretha Tillotson leads this quartet with 9 of her own compositions and with no chordal instruments. The powerhouse duo of the sisters Jensen, Christine on alto and Ingrid on trumpet, project strong statements with plenty of harmonic interplay between them. Ms. Tillotson provides the solid backbone, while drummer Dave Laing holds it all down tastefully and unobtrusively. Reminiscent of the Blue Note era “pianoless” groups, e.g. those led by Gerry Mulligan and Chet Baker.

ARETHA TILLOTSON



Ledisi
For Dinah
Candid Records
2025

For those of us in and around the San Francisco Bay Area in California, we've known about the incredible voice of Ledisi for a long time. Her stint with Verve Records in the late 2000s helped to bring her national, and international, recognition. This release, her 13th studio album (she's amassed a significant body of work!) is her nod to the great Dinah Washington. Just like her previous album honoring Nina Simone, it takes a considerable talent to be able to successfully and respectfully pull off a project like this, and Ledisi "knocks the ball out of the park" (that's an American baseball term!). Featuring the great Christian McBride, Paul Jackson, Jr., and Gregory Porter – and a host of other great contributing musicians; this album is a must for lovers of jazz vocals.

LEDISI



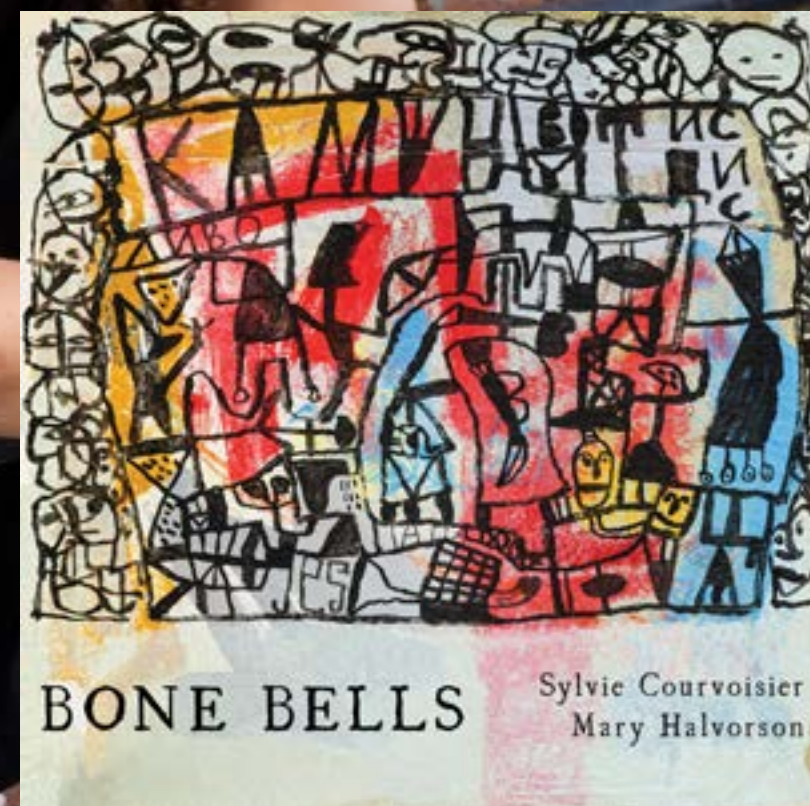
Photo by Ron T. Young

Photo by Veronique Hoegger

Sylvie Courvoisier and Mary Halvorson
Bone Bells
Pyroclastic Records
2025

Two stalwarts of the New York avant garde and progressive jazz scene, guitarist Mary Halvorson and pianist Sylvie Courvoisier have created this stunning duo side on Kris Davis's important record label. This is the latest in a series of duo albums by the pair. At times softly sensitive, other times rife with dense clusters, their partnership is clearly one with a deep sympatico and mutual respect. Harmonically complex while being a highly satisfying listening experience!

SYLVIE COURVOISIER AND MARY HALVORSON



SYNDEE WINTERS



Syndee Winters
Sings Lena Horne
Wake Your Words
2025

As mentioned regarding Ledisi's album in this issue's column, it takes considerable talent and chops to be able to respectfully honor a legendary performer. In this case, the legend is Lena Horne, and the vocalist and executive producer is Syndee Winters. Her co-executive producer was the legendary Eulis Cathey, a stalwart of the music industry who left us too soon before this record was released. Ms. Winters puts a contemporary spin on songs associated with Ms. Horne, injecting a considerable amount of soul, R&B, smooth jazz and some scat singing into the production. One of my favorite drummers, Allan Mednard, plays on some tracks; the wonderful Warren Wolf lends his vibraphone skills on a couple of tracks.

Photo by Cheryl Mann

Photo by Detraz

CORINA BARTRA

Corina Bartra
Tribute to Santana
Blue Spiral
2025

Seems like there should be more Santana tribute albums, but Peruvian artist Corina Bartra comes to the rescue! She applies her Afro-Peruvian sensibilities to her recording of songs associated with Carlos Santana and his band. Two numbers are compositions by Carlos (with others, Samba Pa Ti and Soul Sacrifice). She and her band open the album with the infectious Oye Como Va (a Tito Puente tune popularized by Santana), nicely rearranged. Another song associated with Santana (but originally written by Peter Green for an early Fleetwood Mac album) is Black Magic Woman is also included. A must for any fan of the band Santana!



KRIS DAVIS

Kris Davis and the Lutosławski Quartet
The Solastalgia Suite
Pyroclastic Records
2025

Pianist Kris Davis has composed this major commissioned work for piano and string quartet, with the Solastalgia Suite. The album was recorded with the wonderful Lutosławski Quartet from Poland. This instrumental format is a departure for Ms. Davis from her recent jazz piano trio album. The Suite is broken into 8 sections (ideal for jazz radio airplay!). Lovers of contemporary (20th and 21st century) classical music, as well as jazz piano, will embrace this wonderful work. Released on Kris's own Pyroclastic Records label, which releases and supports contemporary progressive music.

Photo by Calla Kessler



MAJA JAKU



Maja Jaku
Blessed and Bewitched
Origin Records
2025

Originally from Kosovo, Maja Jakupovic, who records and performs as Maja Jaku, released this set of mostly originals late last year. This is a beautifully performed recording that features an all-star band: Michael Rodriguez, Adrian Verdady, Johnathan Blake, Alan Bartus and Dezron Douglas – they perfectly complement her beautiful voice. It's nice to see her appear on the wonderful Origin Records label out of Seattle. I encourage you to check out these exceptional compositions and performances!

Photo by Seva Mazurika

MONIKA HERZIG

Monika Herzig
Transparent
Key of B Records
2026

Keyboardist, composer, leader and educator Monika Herzig has just released a new album “Transparent”, and this one may be her most progressive sounding yet. Inspired by her need to speak in opposition to the recent backlash against transgender people (hence the title of the album), and against those parents supportive of their transgender children – this seems to result in music on this album that has a deep interconnectedness, as the band sound incredibly tight and emotive. All the compositions are originals, all but one penned by Dr. Herzig (one of the compositions is by guitarist and husband Peter Kienle). This is one album that will get heavy airplay on my radio program for certain!

MONIKA HERZIG

Key
of B
Records



WITH
JEREMY ALLEN
TOM CLARK
KARINA COLIS
JOE DONNELLY
PETER KIENLE
TED NASH

TRANSPARENT

Photo by Sarah Slover

Photo by Meredith Truax



Alexa Tarantino
The Roar and the Whisper
Blue Engine Records
2025

Saxophonist Alexa Tarantino has established herself as a jazz heavyweight, having played with Sherrie Maricle's DIVA Jazz Orchestra; Arturo O'Farrill's Afro-Latin Jazz Orchestra; the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, the Frank Kimbrough Ensemble; Darcy James Argue's Secret Society; the Verve Jazz Ensemble – as well as performing as a sidewoman with several prominent jazz artists, notably Cecile McLorin Salvant. This new release is her 5th as a leader, with Steven Feifke on piano, Mark Whitfield Jr. on drums and Philip Norris on bass. Ms. Tarantino is best known for her alto saxophone playing, but she brings her skills on soprano and flute onto this record as well. The album consists of many compelling originals, and a fabulous version of Wayne Shorter's "This is for Albert".

ALEXA TARANTINO



NANAMI HARUTA



Nanami Haruta
The Vibe
Origin Records
2025

Trombonist Nanami Haruta, from the northern parts of Japan (Sapporo), presented her debut recording on Origin Records last year. Her tone, technique and musicality sound quite advanced beyond her age. This may have to do some with her mentor, Prof. Michael Dease, of Michigan State University – one of today's most recognized, and recognizable, trombone masters. In fact, Maestro Dease also performs on a couple of tracks, notably on baritone saxophone, and serves as a co-producer! Co-produced by noted Michigan based composer Gregg Hill, there are other Michigan State University connections on this side, including Director of Jazz Studies Rodney Whitaker and Prof. Xavier Davis. Ulysses Owens Jr. holds down the drums chair. Most impressively Ms. Haruta includes 3 originals, with others by Dease, Whitaker and Hill. Check out the swingin' version of Curtis Fuller's "Algonquin"!

Photo by Lynne Brown

Holly Palmer
Metamorphosis
Colorfield Records
2025

One of the most intriguing and inventive releases of the year was by innovative vocalist Holly Palmer with her “Metamorphosis” release. Jazz? Experimental music? Modern pop? World music? Hard to categorize, and at some point, who cares?! Bandcamp sums it up as well as can be: “jazz inflected art-pop”. Some wonderful sonic textures, provided by some stellar musicians, including multi-instrumentalist, producer and co-composer Peter Min. Several other stellar musicians contribute on the 10 most original tracks. Check it out!

HOLLY PALMER



Photo by Charlie Weinmann

FIONA ROSS

Fiona Ross
Moments in my Notebook
Fiona Ross
2025

Our publisher and head honcho here at Women in Jazz Media should not be ignored! Fiona, aside from publishing this splendid magazine, is also a pianist, vocalist, composer and band leader. All this while holding down a full-time job to pay the bills. I'm not sure how she accomplishes all this, she's some kind of wonder woman, I suppose. She has released this new set of 21 original compositions (wot?!) on a beautifully produced 2-CD box set. She spared no expense on its production. I happened to be in London around the time of the recording of this album, and I know the heartfelt passion that she put into her music (and it shines through!). She is fortunate to be accompanied by her wonderful London-based group. If you are a fan of singer-songwriter based jazz, Fiona brings her own unique voice and talent to this project. Please support the magazine and Fiona and pick up a copy of this special release!

Photo by Steven Tiller





CAROLYN TROWBRIDGE

Carolyn Trowbridge
Found Memories
Carolyn Trowbridge Music
2025

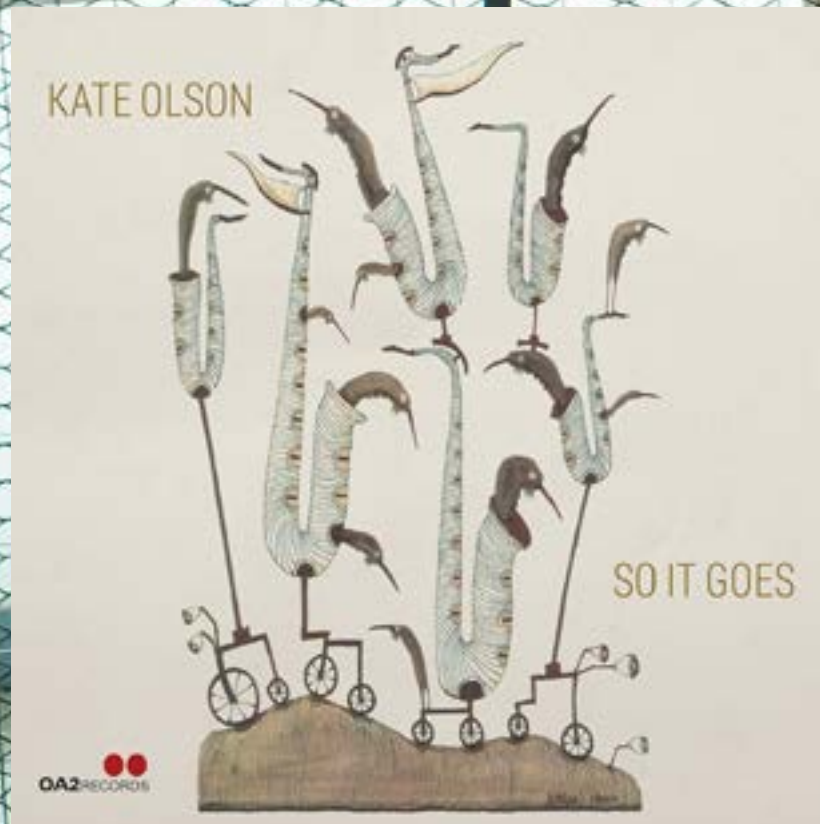
One of my favorite new releases of late is that by vibraphonist Carolyn Trowbridge. Another 'hard to categorize' album, her ensemble on this album, which also includes harpist Elaine Barber and some beautiful flute work by Alex Coke, create an immersive soundscape. My favorite track: "The Old Woman Who Never Grew Older", which features some lovely vocalese by Caitlin Palmer and a nice, medium- paced, churning rhythm. Let's all support independent artists – the occasional purchase of a CD/LP/download sure goes a

Photo by Lucero Valle

Photo by Ernie Sapiro

KATE OLSON

Kate Olson
So It Goes
OA2 Records
2025



Saxophonist and composer Kate Olson leads this pianoless quartet (except for 3 tracks, where Wayne Horvitz guests). Interesting interplay between Kate's soprano and tenor, and Conner Eisenmenger's trumpet and trombone! But Evan Woodle on drums and Tim Carey on electric bass and guitar are not left out of the picture, by any means. Innovative modern jazz – this is the stuff that continues to excite me and feel confident that jazz is not only alive, but thriving – and will continue on well into the future! long way to helping artists continue to “do their thing”.



Abbey_Lincoln
1966

Photo by Jack de Nijs