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DEC 2025

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AND SO MUCH MORE!

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

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We are hugely grateful to the photographers who have contributed to this edition:

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PHOTO OF CAMILLE GAINER BY MONIKA S JAKUBOWSKA

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Welcome to the latest edition of our Women in Jazz Media magazine.

As always, we welcome you all to a magazine full of incredible voices and our new logo! This edition is full of women from across the globe. The dream is that Women in Jazz Media does not need to exist. The dream is that everyone across the world is heard, valued and supported, irrelevant of gender, age, ethnicity, disability or which instrument they play. A place where we all just talk about and enjoy great music. We are far from being there. In the age of AI, authenticity is even more important. This magazine is real. These are real artists, real writers, real music and real images. It is my honour to present stories, experiences, pain and joy through imagery, music, words and support from the contributors in this edition.

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 Yolanda Brown by Tatiana Gorilovsky

A TALE OF TWO CITIES

BY ISABEL MARQUEZ

PHOTO BY ANNA YATSKEVICH

Hailing from South Korea, composer, conductor and pianist Rin Seo encompasses the ever-changing nature of the ensemble jazz scene, through her 14 piece genre-defying Rin Seo Collective. Her chamber jazz orchestra brings together various moments from Seo's musical upbringing; Korean folk music throughout her childhood, her training in Western Classical music in Seoul, to the jazz vibrations of New York City.

I think for the jazz collective I consider the musicians I feature more, because improvisation is such a big part of the music. So I consider the musicians' individual sound a lot, which helps me decide who I choose to work with.

Through building her life in New York, to study jazz and composition at Berklee College of Music, her debut album 'City Suite' was born on October 3rd 2025. With the help of some huge names in the New York and global jazz scene, and with the support of Cellar Music Group, 'City Suite' is a 10 year reflection of Seo's migration to the big apple, and the impact the city has had on her craft.

2025 has been pretty busy preparing for the album release! I have been working really hard to pay off my recording fees… I've been pursuing work in both classical and jazz, so I wrote some commissioned works and participated in a summer music camp, so there has been a lot going on!

I composed some music for a unique ensemble, flutes, saxophone, basson, bass clarinet, french horn, vibraphone and piano. This was for the Akropolis Chamber Music Institute.

Being influenced by orchestral classical and jazz orchestras, I am used to music on a large scale.

I wanted to make my own signature ensemble that brings my compositional vision to life.

It was intriguing to hear more about how the Rin Seo Collective came to life and what Seo prioritised when building this musical force. Seo's commitment to assembling just the right ensemble, to intentionally lift each piece to new heights cannot be understated.

As legendary composer Jim McNeely says, "[Seo's] imagination and skill have produced a marvelous album" that features a "big-enough band…to provide power when needed but can also be very lyrical and flexible when changing textures."

I've played with a lot of the musicians I chose before, and some of the others I've listened to for a lot of my life. For example, Steve Wilson; I've never worked with him before but I really loved his sound. When I composed 'Alone, but Not Alone', I instantly thought about Steve's sound. I asked him to join the project and he said 'Definitely, yes!' And Ingrid Jensen, I met her while I was studying, so she was an obvious one to consider for a few of the pieces. During a big band rehearsal, she spontaneously performed a solo on one of my pieces. Her playing that day felt like a surprising gift, and from then on, I dreamed of featuring her on my debut recording. I'm so thrilled that my dream became a reality.

I feel like in New York City there are a lot of women leaders in the jazz scene, however I really hope to see more women musicians in the big bands of the future. It does feel like these worlds, classical and jazz, are male dominated. I don't feel a barrier as a woman in composition, things are getting better and better.

The Rin Seo Collective features:


SONCO 766 2615

Rin Seo composer, conductor
Steve Wilson piccolo, flute, soprano sax, alto sax
Ethan Helm soprano sax, alto sax
Dan Pratt flute, clarinet, tenor sax
Andrew Gutauskas clarinet, bass clarinet, baritone sax
John Lake trumpet
Ingrid Jensen trumpet
Adam Unsworth horn
Nick Grinder trombone
Joyce Hammann violin
Sita Chay violin
Orlando Wells viola
Jody Redhage Ferber cello
Sebastian Noelle guitar
Adam Birnbaum piano
Matt Clohesy double bass
Jared Schonig drums, percussion

I have been preparing this album since early 2024, and I actually started writing it 10 years ago, so it's been a pretty long journey! It's really nice to get good reviews and to hear everyone's reaction.

The last 10 years have been me finding my own voice. I was very picky with the material I chose for the album. I definitely needed 10 years to bring this album together.
There were a lot of takes and revisions to the pieces to find the best sound. I wanted to create a story, encompassing the changes in my music over this time.

The first 3 pieces are about New York City, which has been a significant influence in my work as an artist. Also, I created pieces pointing to my personal tragedies, which helped me grow, as well as musical influences from films and other genres.

Throughout the album, we begin to recognise Seo's personal trials, ambitions, struggles and triumph, as well as her musical development and focus over the last ten years. The album paints a picture of what it means to move to a new place, unravelling riveting grooves alongside melancholic melodies, paired with the huge sound of this exceptional jazz orchestra. Seo emphasises melody at the fore paired with artful counterpoint, rhythmic complexity, and stylistic blending. Seo's influences are clear throughout the album, particularly through the inclusion of a reconstructed arrangement of Wayne Shorter's 'Blues a la Carte'. Furthermore, she highlights key emotional moments in her songwriting, heard in 'Lullaby', written to commemorate Seo's late cousin and friend, Ben, and "others [she has] lost along the way,".I was keen to find out more about Seo's music past and how her education had got her to this impressive point in her career.

I studied classical music in Korea and my school forced me to write atonal music. At the time I was too young to understand it, so I didn't like it! I wasn't planning on being a composer in the future because I wasn't open to composing different types of music, especially atonal music. I then built more of a curiosity about jazz harmony and improvisation, so I decided to study jazz in the United States and explore diverse music. My teacher recommended me to the Berklee College of Music, and this is where I experienced jazz, pop music, musical theatre… everything! I wanted to combine my classical language with everything I had learnt at Berklee, to make my unique sound.

I had perfect pitch when I was young and I liked mimicking different sounds on the piano. This is what led me to pursue the instrument. Since then, from the age of 6, I've been classically trained on piano and when I was 17, I started writing music.

For me, deciding a theme in the music is really important. If someone asks me to compose a piece for them, I instantly just go outside; to the museum, or the park. I explore things and try to find the story

I want to tell. Then I'll sit in front of the piano and improvise, or write down the melodies that come into my head. Then they get bigger and bigger.

A remarkable debut, 'City Suite' takes listeners on an incredible path, as they are taken on a journey not just through New York, but through the musical and emotional soul of Seo herself. The album has received overwhelmingly positive reviews: praised as brilliant and self assured, whilst challenging the boundaries of genre and modern day jazz.

The album has clear narrative depth, outlining Seo's experiences of isolation, and community in New York City, whilst keeping true to her musical upbringing and the various layers of her cultural experience.

Next year I am just focussing on doing a lot of performances across the globe, so I am trying to find these opportunities. But as a big band leader, with a 14 piece chamber ensemble, it's really hard to find these spaces to play in. I am doing my best, I'm hoping to have a lot of shows in the United States and Korea, and hopefully in Europe too.

As I came to the United States 10 years ago, I don't know much about the Korean jazz scene now, but I have heard that it is growing fast. I really hope I can keep the 14 piece ensemble together for these performances, if needed I can try to modify it, but each musician and instrument has such an important role that it will really change the music if that happens.

Rin Seo truly is a formidable force and a refreshing addition to the global jazz scene, a salient connector of cities, genres and listeners. From start to finish, City Suite is a work of brilliance, a true testament to what this wonderful and ambitious composer is capable of.

RIN SEO LINKS CLICK HERE

CLICK ON THE ALBUM COVER TO BUY

ISABEL MARQUEZ LINKS CLICK HERE

Photos by Siphiwe Mhlambi

NOTHEMBA MADUMO

Radio & TV broadcaster and Jazz show host Nothemba Madumo has been at the forefront of the South African Jazz scene for many years. Her radio show "Jazz and Beyond with Nothemba" has recently been nominated for the South African Radio Awards in the best music show category, which is hugely significant not just as recognition of her tireless work, but the impact of this work in the wider community. She is a role model to many and it was a great honour to have the opportunity to explore Nothemba's work and share her love and passion for the importance of jazz.

'Jazz forms the essence of our culture, heritage, struggle, freedom and identity. I want to ensure our rich jazz heritage is lived and embraced by all and taken forward. So, come on in, come to my home, our home, the home of jazz in South Africa.'

Jazz has been part of Nothemba's life since she was a little girl, with her parents filling her home with the incredible music of Oscar Peterson, Sarah Vaughan and Ella. The seed was firmly planted in jazz.

Both my parents were academics, my mom was focussed on science, mathematics and music and my Dad was all about economics and English law, but at home, it was all about jazz. Both my parents were crazy about jazz music. My Dad had an awesome jazz collection and that was all that was allowed to be played in the house. It was really wonderful.

Growing up as a teenager and going out with friends, we listened to R&B and soul and my first boyfriend bought me a Chaka Khan LP and I was so excited. But my dad said 'what is that?! Not in my house.'

The political climate in South Africa played a huge role in not only the development of jazz, but in jazz as an identity, which is at the heart of Nothemba's work. Political exiles from South Africa would pass by Nothemba's family home, bringing with them the music of South African jazz musicians such as Miriam Makeba. I was astounded to hear that Nothemba's piano teacher was the jazz master Abdullah Ibrahim.

Abdullah Ibrahim was en route to Europe via Swaziland and was friends with my dad and actually lived in Swaziland for a few years. He'd come and play the piano at our home and my dad said 'teach this little one something' and he became my teacher! He just used to make me memorise chords. When I was about ten or eleven, I would panic every time he was coming, because I hadn't practiced. He was a horrible teacher and I told him that years later, when I interviewed him, and he said 'I know. But I have created a music school now, so go there for proper lesson'.

Nothemba always wanted to work in media, and as a student she worked part time in television, and after completing her bachelor of education, to please her parents, she launched her career. Initially working on previewing TV shows, she quickly moved to continuity and news

announcements, but radio was calling. Initially co-hosting, Nothemba eventually took over and started hosting her own jazz show and has been hosting jazz shows ever since 1989.

Although American jazz had a strong voice, the beauty of jazz in South Africa is in large part due to it being heavily rooted in the different cultures, lifestyles and political landscape across the country. The importance of Nothemba's work during this time cannot be underestimated. When Nelson Mandela was released from prison in 1990, the road to ending the apartheid system was visible and music, especially jazz, was a vital voice throughout this time.

Let me lay a bit of a background into the South African audiences regarding jazz. We must remember that during the apartheid era, which is not really long ago considering 1994 was almost yesterday, a lot of the South African jazz music was banned. Therefore, it was American jazz that was accessed. So, a lot of us, especially the older generation, were really exposed to the Coltranes and the Miles and all those musicians from America. The South African musicians were using their music to promote peace and justice and freedom for South Africa and the government of the time was not allowing that even airplay on radio. So that's why, what was going on outside became what people knew. The industry then was just so terrible for black South African jazz musicians and you would only see them if they were performing somewhere. Recording was a very difficult experience at that time. But then after 1994 access to recordings and South African musicians and even the rest of Africa became easier. And then we had growth and excitement and in being able to access and listen to this music, it helped with our own identity and pride in ourselves.

With this time of incredible growth, excitement and joy, and finally a space for South African artists, new audiences were developed. The perception initially was that jazz was, however, for an older audience and this was the focus in the media, rather than jazz as an artform. Jazz was completely alienated, as the focus of mainstream music was on youth culture. Nothemba's radio show was moved later and later and she has always had to fight for the space for jazz to exist.

This is an art form that is significant and important.

It is now getting better because the young ones are saying we want it and we love this! We are now realising how it frees us in our mindsets. It frees us culturally, lifestyle wise, in every way because you can be anything you want. It allows for that kind of creativity, that freedom in your creativity where you are not just looking for a number one hit. You are looking for substance and consciousness. And I'm loving that. Gives me goosebumps when I hear these young musicians and young audiences talk about jazz like that.

The strength of the South African community to rise above challenges and fight for their voice has always been inspirational. For women, the perceived lack of value, especially for vocalists, is developing newly empowered artists.

We have a lot of vocalists and a lot of them are also instrumentalists as well, which also helps in having to manoeuvre and position themselves. But some great vocalists have struggled because even if they are musical directing, they are just seen as that, 'a singer'. Their contribution is not seen as valued as it would be for a male. But, that situation has forced women to take the lead in their projects, where they have a say in what they want to do. But as you can imagine, female musicians also have

Photos by Siphiwe Mhlambi

Photos by Siphiwe Mhlambi

the struggle of the industry being set up for men. No consideration of the fact that if you are a female and the gig goes out late, how are you going to get home safe? If you're late for rehearsal because of your baby, it's not that understood. All those things that women have to deal with are a challenge. Which unfortunately can make it look like we can't be taken seriously because we're not showing up. But it is changing, as women are now leading their own projects. The work I do is also very important because the kind of society we grow up in, we always boxed as women. When a woman can do just as good, if not better, than a man, how will anyone know? So my role becomes important in that way and to show how things are evolving around jazz, jazz culture and the jazz community.

Nothemba truly is an inspiration to so many in the community and supports the next generation of presenters and DJs. People see what she does and believe it is possible for them. This is significant. I ended our interview with asking Nothemba for any words of wisdom or advice she wanted to share:

I recently interviewed Zoë Modiga and one of the questions I asked her was why she thinks she does what she does.That's the question I ask myself every time there's a challenge or a difficulty. I keep reminding myself why I do this. She was asking me how I have lasted this long and I said it is because of the why. If your why is honest, earnest, intentional and genuine, you will stay as long as you need to.

Please do spend some time exploring the following artists that Nothemba recommends:

Nomfundo Xaluva
Thandi Ntuli
Tutu Puoane
ZoëModiga
Siya Makuzeni
Nobuhle Ashanti
Shannon Mowday
Talie Monin
Melanie Scholtz
Lindiwe Maxolo
Thandiswa Mazwai
Gabi Motuba
Linda Tshabalala
Ziza Muftic
Spha Mdlalose
Siya Charles
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Melorie Jane
Titi Luzipo
Judith Sephuma
Lisa Bauer
Zama Jobe
Natalie Rungan
Simphiwe Dana
Xolisa Dlamini
Ncesh Nonxishi

Text by Fiona Ross

NOTHEMBA LINKS CLICK HERE

Aged 14. PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN

Remembering and celebrating Kathleen ‘Kathy’ Stobart 01/04/1925 – 06/07/2014

A jazz pioneer, unwittingly breaking down barriers and inspiring others in a male-dominated world

By Kim Cypher

As a female saxophonist working in today’s jazz world, I am honoured to pay tribute to the incredible musical legacy of British jazz saxophonist Florence Kathleen ‘Kathy’ Stobart (1 April 1925 – 6 July 2014) whose incredible life story and achievements fill me with huge respect, admiration, inspiration, and a sense of awe.

Best known for her time with the Humphrey Lyttelton band and leading her own bands at a time when women were a rarity in jazz, Kathy performed with many jazz musicians from the UK and America during her long, successful career. She also headlined the first women’s jazz festival at London’s Drill Hall Art Centre in 1982, which was a groundbreaking moment for women in jazz.

Her performing career together with her dedication to tutoring others and leading workshops inspired a whole new generation of female musicians.

To find out more about her fascinating story I chatted with Kathy’s son Peter Courtley, who was delighted to share his own memories and provide further details of his mother’s inspiring life, career and legacy. Before the interview began, Peter shared a wonderful story with me, explaining why he will refer to his mum as ‘Kath’ during the interview. From his recollection, at around age fifteen Peter was with his mum at Ronnie Scott’s Jazz Club where she was in conversation with Ronnie Scott himself. Peter had wanted to ask his mum a question but felt the professional setting required referring to his mum by name, so he interrupted the conversation using the name “Kath” rather than “Mum”. Later his mum had praised him for such a good idea and from that point on the name stuck. It was also the name used by her friends.

Kim – Your mum (Kath) had an incredible musical career which began in 1939 at just fourteen years of age, performing in Don Rico’s all-female swing band. Between then and 1952 when she and your father, trumpeter Bert Courtley had their first son David, she had already firmly established herself as a widely respected saxophonist. Moving from the Northeast to London in 1942, she quickly found herself playing in the jazz clubs of Soho before joining Canadian pianist and band leader Art Thompson’s band in 1943, performing at London’s Embassy Club, a favourite haunt for visiting stars such as Glen Miller, Bing Crosby, Bob Hope and the Andrews Sisters. At age 18 she married Art Thompson, a marriage which ended in divorce in 1951. During that time, she travelled to Canada and America playing in jazz clubs from New York to Los Angeles.

When your mum married your father in 1951, they formed the Kathy Stobart Band together. You must have some wonderful memories of family life growing up with your two brothers David and Paul. What can you remember about that time?

Peter – *"From my earliest memories, before I understood her stature as a musician, Kath simply felt invincible. She worked many evenings and was sometimes away, though not as much as our father. Her attention to us three boys never seemed to falter. When she was home, she had so much energy and love for family life. She tackled any home project without hesitation, whether skilled or not: she dug out and built a garden pond, put up a large lean-to at the back of the house, made wooden bunk beds for Paul and me (they rocked like a pirate ship), and made some superb clothes, including sometimes our school blazers. She was also a great cook, always feeding the family to the hilt and whatever musicians dropped by. It seemed like an open house.*

Over time I began to realise 'who' she was, her stature in the business and how she was regarded. My first real sense of her standing came at around age thirteen, at the Bull's Head in Barnes. A Sunday lunchtime gig, late 1970, when Ben Webster was in London recording for Ronnie Scott's label. Ronnie had introduced them, and Ben said he'd like to hear her play. She assumed it was just polite chat.

But that Sunday lunchtime, in he walked, unannounced, sax case in hand, and played the entire second set with her, to the astonishment of everyone in the pub. It was quite magical.

As I grew older, I saw her in countless bands, pubs, and clubs, including Ronnie Scott's. No matter who she stood alongside — hard-bop modernists or dyed-in-the-wool trad players — she always played exactly as she wanted to. Her approach was simple: once the music started, it didn't matter who she was playing with, she would play confidently as herself.

Another great memory was the 1977 Nice Jazz Festival, where she played among ageing but magnificent giants: Vic Dickenson, Slam Stewart, Arnett Cobb, Kai Winding, Kenny Davern, Earl "Fatha" Hines."

Kim: Kathy was a pioneer in a male-dominated world, leading the way as a female jazz instrumentalist at a time when women were a rarity in jazz.

With no other female role models to relate to, how much significance did your mum place on her gender?

Peter – *"Kath projected such confidence, self-belief, and musical authority, and was treated with such respect by her (mostly male) peers, that her gender didn't seem to enter the discussion, certainly not in the version of Kath's world that I saw. Once she was bitten by the jazz bug at age 16 –17, she never doubted what she wanted to be. Even back in 1942, when she entered Soho's basement clubs and bottle parties, with no female role models anywhere around her, she thought only about whether she could play, not about being a woman in a male world. Her self-confessed naivety probably shielded her from recognising prejudice directly. She took the leap, proved herself, and was quickly accepted. From then on, she thought of herself simply as a jazz musician, never a "female jazz musician," and that's how, I believe, her colleagues saw her.*

Becoming a role model for women, breaking down barriers, was never her aim, yet that is exactly what she unwittingly did and became. A reluctant icon you could say…

Through the 70s she ran her own modern

The Don Rico Band 1939-40
PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN

jazz quintet featuring Harry Beckett. Kath was the person hustling for gigs, organising tours, she even bought a Transit van fitting it out with a second row of aircraft seats, bought a PA… always doing much of the heavy lifting. She was a powerhouse at home and on stage.

But writing her biography (yep… I'm about 2/3rds through…) now makes me appreciate that much of my view was simplistic. Of course, there would have been moments where gender shaped how she was treated or perceived. Other female musicians have spoken openly about this. Kath's experience would have carried some of those same pressures, even if she didn't voice or care to notice them."

Kim – Your mum came from a musical background, and your father Bert Courtley was a trumpeter. Has that musical gene been passed down the generations?

Peter – *"As you said Kim, Kath came from a strongly musical family: her mother was a fine pianist, and her two older brothers played clarinet and saxophone. Bert, in contrast, came from a non-musical family but had the same drive and passion to succeed as a musician.*

Growing up, there was always music in the house and there was a gentle hope that 'at least' one of us boys might follow in their footsteps. Musicians visiting the house always asked, "So what do you play?" There was an implied expectation, but never too much pressure.

We seemed to take to music easily. Kath and Bert encouraged us to join the local choir, not for religious reasons, but for ear-training and sight-reading. Dave refused;

In the early 70s. Photo by Val Wilmer

Paul and I joined, partly lured by the thought of weekly pay. We both had strong, pure voices and were regularly chosen for solos. Sometimes we reinforced the St Paul's Cathedral choir for large events, including the St Matthew Passion. Kath always attended anything meaningful we were involved in.

Paul was put forward for the English Opera Group (Benjamin Britten). He was accepted and performed in London, Aldeburgh, Paris and Expo '67. He spent about 18 months with them.

Both Paul and I began learning double-bass, but leading up to Bert's death, and especially afterwards, we rebelled and quit. Laziness, emotion, typical teenage behaviour... Kath wasn't in the frame of mind to object, so just let it go. We later regretted it.

Later, at different times, we played in Kath's City Lit rehearsal band (me on tenor and baritone sax, Paul on bass). We gigged at places like the Bull & Gate, sometimes with thirty-five plus players. Loud, sometimes a little chaotic but great fun. I collaborated with Kath on several jazz tunes for her Quintet in the late 70s although only one was recorded, the title track on 'Arbeia'.

Paul played for years in a cabaret band (with Andy Panayi appearing now and then). Both of us played in cover/blues bands including with sax player Dave Quincy in one 'version', appearing around London at the Greyhound, Fulham; the Cricketers, Kennington; Cartoon, Croydon; once at Dingwalls Camden and once at the Kent Bikers show just before Suzi Quatro.

We even briefly backed Terry Sylvester (ex-Swinging Blue Jeans / Hollies) for a handful of gigs, the largest being a week's residency at the Batley Variety Club (the Frontier Club).

Eventually we both stopped. We didn't have Kath and Bert's drive (or probably... talent). My music now is personal composition, somewhere between film music, punk, soul and jazz."

Kim – Your mum enjoyed a long, successful career in jazz, working actively on the scene into her eighties, until 2007…that's incredible! What can you tell me about the latter part of her career?

Peter – *"The 1990s were generally good. She enjoyed the 'usual' variety and line-ups at various jazz clubs dotted around the country, she played many gigs with Joan Cunningham, Dick Pearce, Nick Weldon, Andy Cleyndert and Bobby Worth, including several jazz cruises (one with Elaine Delmar).*

She built up her teaching and big-band courses in Devon and organised many concerts in Axminster, bringing down Humph's band, George Melly, the Don Lusher/Ted Heath tribute band, US tenor star Scott Hamilton and others.

She received recognition:
- 2000 – Post Office Services to British Jazz Award
- 2005 – Parliamentary Jazz Award for Services to Jazz

She also tutored Dame Judi Dench for 'The Last of the Blonde Bombshells' (2000) and performed in the huge South Park Oxford concert with Humph's band and Radiohead. However, from about 1999 onwards, accidents, falls, and knee/hip replacements gradually undermined her playing and her confidence. By 2002/3 her decline was evident. It was sad, given her former strength and vitality."

Kim – Wow, tutoring Dame Judi Dench for 'The Last of the Blonde Bombshells' is quite a claim to fame. Alan Plater's TV film

captures the spirit of the lives of women who took on non-traditional roles during the war (I'm sure that will have resonated with your mum). Did she ever share her experiences of this?

Peter – *"Yes. Kath already knew Judi… she'd once depped a couple of weeks for Barbara Thompson in Cabaret in the late 60s, performing on stage while Judi played Sally Bowles.*

Judi remembered Kath and they became friendly during the Bombshells filming. Kath coached Judi; there was mutual respect and affection.

The film itself reflected Ivy Benson's world more than Kath's. Kath rarely played in all-female bands apart from her early stint with Don Rico's Ladies Swing Band.
Kath acknowledged the war created openings for women, but her path didn't follow the same narrative as described in Alan Plater's screen play or stage play."

Kim – You mentioned that your mum performed in the South Park concert in Oxford with the Humphrey Lyttleton band in 2001, along with a star-studded lineup including Radiohead and an audience of 42,000 fans. Were you there?

Peter – *"Sadly, no… but her grandson Alex was. He said she received a massive cheer when she walked on stage, something Humph also noted in his writing.*
Kath enjoyed the experience but found it strange: she had no idea how famous Radiohead were (and couldn't see exactly why. I personally love them but that's another matter). Kath said that backstage they were treated like stars, fussed over. Having someone try to carry her sax case amused her, that wasn't her world. But it was a quite a moment nevertheless."

Kim – Your mum's career involved much travelling. Did she have a favourite place to be?

Peter – *"Kath loved being on the road, both musically and as a family on holiday etc. In her late 60's she even went back-packing with my two brothers in Malaysia…She loved it!*

Her favourite film was The Wizard of Oz; her favourite book later in life was Kim by Kipling. All about a journey of some sort in search of 'something'…
But equally, she adored coming home, especially to her cottage in Axmouth, Devon. She loved the peace, the birdlife along the estuary, and her pets. It was her longest home, and it was heartbreaking when she had to leave it to go into a care home."

Kim – What do think your mum would make of today's jazz scene?

Peter – *"I think she'd be genuinely encouraged by the standard of young jazz players emerging today, of all backgrounds and genders. I remember watching Emma Rawicz in the BBC Young Jazz Musician 2022 final and thinking how much Kath would have loved her playing.*

She'd also have loved Simon Spillett's big-band tributes to Tubby Hayes. I saw the band at the 100 Club a while back and it was superb; full of fire and respect for the music, the kind of thing Kath valued deeply. Bert too.

Making a living as a jazz musician is still tough, just as it was in the 1950s and 60s. But those bitten by the bug, as Kath was, simply have to play. They'll travel anywhere and perform for anyone who'll listen. That was Kath's life entirely."

Kim – Your mum enjoyed teaching other players alongside developing her own playing. Who were her biggest influences?
Peter – "She loved teaching. In the late

In the early 70s. Photo by Val Wilmer

Kath in her 80s.
PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN

'50s/early '60s she and Bert ran rehearsal bands; Don Weller came through one and since credited Kath with helping him transition into jazz.

She taught many privately, including the South End tenor player and jazz-club host Ken Baxter and later rising stars like Iain Ballamy, Simon Picard and many more. Her City Lit sax and big band workshops in Holborn became a long-running part of her life. Many future names passed through the various classes: Ray Gelato, Andy Panayi, Claude Deppa, plus pop/soul musicians such as the brass players from Beggar & Co. and Pigbag.

In terms of her influences…Early records that shaped her: Lester Young, Benny Carter, the Ellington band.

During the war the London scene influenced and supported her: Dennis Rose, Jimmy Skidmore, Kenny Baker etc... She also played with visiting US stars like Pepper Adams and Peanuts Hucko.

Ben Webster was a major influence, and later Sonny Rollins became perhaps her favourite tenor player.

Of course, Dizzy, Clifford Brown, and so on… She also admired the work of Horace Silver, Chuck Mangione, Phil Woods and others. But… really, from the mid-fifties onwards she became very assured about who she was and the style she wanted to play in. Listened to plenty of people, no doubt influenced by their compositions etc. but didn't try and copy."

Kim – Your mum was highly respected in the business, unwittingly breaking down barriers and inspiring others as the first female jazz instrumentalist to lead an all-male band. You and your family must be incredibly proud.

Peter – *"Yes, we're immensely proud."*

Kathleen Stobart Orchestra 1950s
PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN

Kathleen Stobart 1944
PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN

My sincere thanks to Peter and Kathy's family for sharing wonderful stories, memories and photographs which have enabled me to remember and celebrate a true pioneer in the history of women in jazz. What an honour.

To find out more about Kathy's incredible life, career and legacy

please visit the website here

Here's looking forward to the forthcoming biography by Peter too!

KIM CYPHER LINKS CLICK HERE

Kathy Stobart Quintet – Nice Jazz Festival 1979
Kathy returned to Nice Jazz Festival in 1979 with her 'Kathy Stobart Quintet' – she made quite an impression on John Thurlow (Jazz in Britain).

Kathleen Stobart 1978
PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN

BEHIND THE LENS

THE PHOTOGRAPHERS

TATIANA GORILOVSKY

CLICK HERE TO VISIT TATIANA'S WEBSITE

Adriana Lord by Tatiana Gorilovsky
Pizza Express, Holborn
London
24.09.2025

Alice Zawadzki by Tatiana Gorilovsky
Jazz Cafe Posk
London
04.10.2025

Amy Gadiaga by Tatiana Gorilovsky
Jazz Cafe
London
20.11.2025

Dee Dee Bridgewater by Tatiana Gorilovsky
Jazz Voice, London Jazz Festival
London
14.11.2025

Soul Women Unite by Tatiana Gorilovsky
Avery Sunshine, Mica Paris, YolanDa Brown, Selina Albright, Georgia Cécile, Luisa Santiago and Annastasia Baker
Cadogan Hall
London
03.10. 2025

Melanie Charles by Tatiana Gorilovsky
Ronnie Scott's
London
20.11.2025

Photo by Guy Fonck

NABOU CLAERHOUT

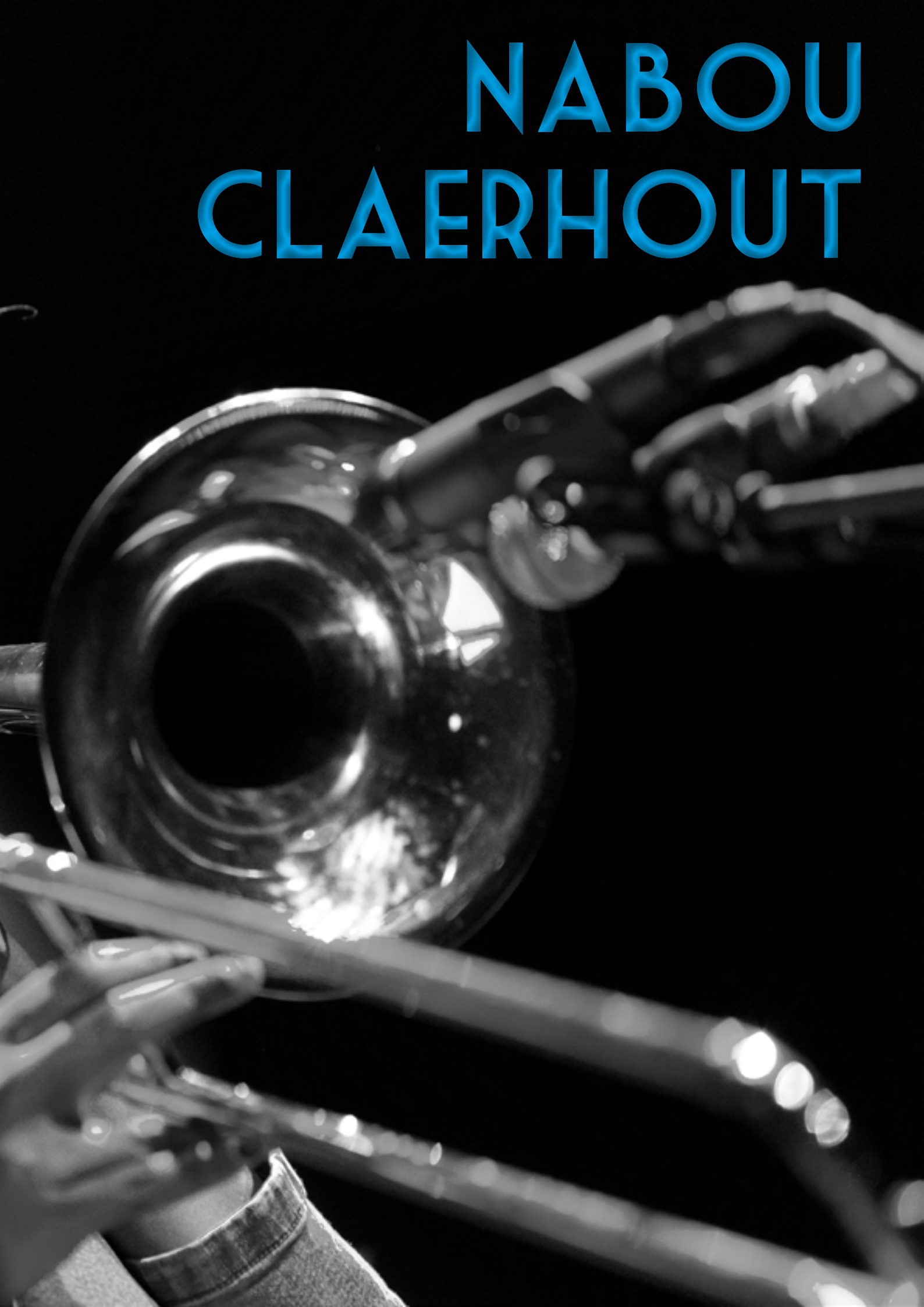


Photo by Dave Stapleton

INDIGO: THE CREATIVE EVOLUTION OF NABOU CLAERHOUT

Trombonist and composer Nabou Claerhout's star is firmly on the rise as she shines a very welcome and much needed light on the jazz trombone. Hailing from Antwerp, her credits are already significant, with performances at festivals across the world including the North Sea Jazz Festival, London Jazz Festival, Jazz in Duketown, Salzburg Jazz Festival and the JazzFest Berlin. Nabou also won the 'Jong Jazztalent Gent' prize in 2021 and has since been the artist in residence at Rataplan and Flagey's Brussels Jazz Festival.

As a researcher and educator, Nabou also has a full portfolio, working with Ghent Youth Jazz Orchestra, National Youth Jazz Orchestra, Young Metropole Orchestra, Metropole Orchestra and Ghost Trance Music & Toolbox. She explores the depth of jazz with a range of initiatives including her 'The power of rhythm in jazz improvisation and compositions' project where she investigated methods of utilising rhythm as a building block for jazz improvisation and compositions.

She released her debut EP 'Hubert' in 2019, followed by her debut album 'You Know' in 2021 and after winning the Jong Jazztalent Gent prize in 2021, Nabou founded her own Trombone Ensemble and released the album 'Trombone Ensemble Nabou Claerhout' on W.E.R.F. Records in 2023. Her new album 'Indigo' is set for release in January 2026 with Edition records.

Nabou's connection with the trombone started at a very early age before she was signed up to a music school in Brussels. Whereas many parents are not always supportive of music, Nabou's mother told her she needed to fall in love with an instrument. A simple but significant statement that clearly stayed in Nabou's heart, mind and soul. Pouring through music videos (this was pre YouTube) TV and DVDs, watching live music concerts from a range of artists, Nabou considered a few instruments but none of them connected with her until she met the trombone.

It was a very abstract thing for my mother to say to me as an eight-year-old. But looking back I am really happy she said that to me. I ended up with the trombone because I felt it had such a warm sound. It reminds me of the voice of a mother. I don't know why I say specifically mother, but that's how it felt. It can be low, it can be a bit high, can be very warm, but it also can be very tight and maybe I felt that it represented my own mother. It also had a slide and unlike the other instruments I was exploring, it was something that also spoke to my 8-year-old self.

Now enrolled into the local music school and the start of her training, Nabou's sister gave her the DVD of the music film 'My First Name is Maceo' which is where she was introduced to the saxophones of Maceo Parker and Pee Wee Ellis, and Fred Wesley's trombone. This moment hit home and raised awareness of what the trombone could do.

I remember when I was young, I told my

mom, I would love to marry these guys! I totally fell in love with the way they played and that opened everything for me because the academies I attended were very classical. Their perspective of playing music at the time was mainly classical music, so my trombone playing was classical. I never really thought about it as an issue, it was more just a practical thing, getting to know the instrument. But then the first time I heard Fred Wesley playing?! It opened up my idea of the instrument. You could play popular stuff, funky stuff and this was really my first step in the jazz direction in a way.

Nabou's training took her to Art High School Brussels, to Codarts Rotterdam, the Royal Academy of Music in London and fast forward a few years, she has since taught at Kortrijk Conservatory, the music academies of Wilrijk and Sint-Agatha-Berchem, and is currently a master coach at the Royal Conservatory of Antwerp.

Alongside her work in education, Nabou released her debut EP 'Hubert' (2019), her debut album 'You Know' (2021) and after winning the Jong Jazztalent Gent' prize in 2021, she founded her own Trombone Ensemble and released the album Trombone Ensemble Nabou Claerhout, on W.E.R.F. Records in 2023. After a few years of extensive performing and incredible reviews, Nabou was firmly embedded and flourishing in the scene and it was time for her next album 'Indigo', to take shape. Due out in January on Edition Records, 'Indigo' explores change, renewal and shifting human connections and displays Nabou's growth and maturity as an instrumentalist but also as a composer.

Her debut EP 'Hubert' was created and released at a time when many people didn't know of her work and so there was an amount of freedom within this. Not just freedom with practicalities, but learning and reflecting on audience engagement. While the new album reflects on those experiences it was important to Nabou that it is all her – her sound. I asked Nabou about her growth since her first release.

'it always comes from what I love in music. I'm also growing up, so I think you can hear that in my music. What moves me is something different compared to six years ago. I think the new album is more mature. It's not necessarily more intellectual because that's not really what I want to do with music, but it feels more mature in the way that I play the trombone; more mature in the way the songs work together. If you listen to the previous albums, there is a type of sound, different vibes, but in this album, it's more of a collage. It's not schizophrenic! You don't jump from one song to another one with no connection between. It feels like the things that I love - and I love a lot of different stuff!

With a large and varied portfolio of work and as an in-demand trombonist, Nabou was working on commissions for theatre work and residencies, and when she realised it was time for a new album, she was incredibly disciplined in what she needed to do to get into that mindset. Her compositional process for this album was a musician's dream and she placed herself in a completely free space. Locked away, removing all distractions including apps from her phone, Nabou spent two weeks working on the material.

What I really love to do is to put compositional weeks in my agenda so that I don't say yes to anything else. I am a totally different person when it comes to composition weeks. Normally I'm constantly on social media, working, up late, waking up very late but when I am composing, it's totally different. I delete all my social media apps. I do yoga in the morning; I do some meditation in the morning. I wake up at eight, all to get into that compositional mindset. It's the only way that it works for me. I try to not play concerts because

Photo by Dave Stapleton


Photo by Dave Stapleton

that's a totally different vibe of practising and getting into that mindset. I love to go into the compositional process so that you can really dive in. So, for this album, I had two weeks to compose this album.

'Indigo' is described as an album of metamorphosis, exploring new collaborations, new ideas and a focus on growth, development and renewal. With Nabou leading on trombone and as the composer, the quartet includes old and new collaborators with Trui Amerlinck (double bass) Gijs Idema (guitar) and Daniel Jonkers (drums), all of whom help to beautifully shape the sound and get to the heart of the work. Nabou is very quick to point out that she is not alone in this project.

I have three amazing musicians around me that I am really happy with. Daniel Jonkers on the drums is very grounded, very tight, but I'm not only talking of tightness, because it really comes from his body. I feel in a way that the album is so true to myself and I feel that also with Daniel through the way he plays, it comes straight from the heart. Gijs Idema who was actually the first guitar player of the band when we started back in 2016, and then he moved to New York but when he came back in the band and it felt so good, it felt right. These are three, very, very beautiful people and very beautiful musicians. I'm the only one on the cover, but I'm definitely not the only one who made this album.

The album title 'Indigo' speaks to the theme of transformation and metamorphosis present throughout the album. The indigo plant has a long history in the art world, where it has been used in ancient pigments and dyes and genuinely shaped cultures and histories. The album's press release states that 'when the colourless sap from the leaves of the indigo plant comes into contact with oxygen in the air, it turns vibrant colours after a fermentation process. This metaphor runs through the entire album, which moves between darkness and light, mourning and beauty, tension and breathing space.'

Nabou explains that every album has specific colours.

For the first one it was yellow, then red/blue and when I was thinking about this next album, I felt the colour indigo. Then we realised that the indigo plant comes from a dirty grey mud and then works with the oxygen in the air and it becomes something beautiful. So with the title, I wanted to talk to the beauty of something that at first doesn't really look so beautiful, like if I'm talking about an end of something when you feel it's very heavy and you see it from a more dark side in a way, but of course there's something that is very good in the end. Taking something from the dirt, something ugly that turns into something beautiful.

Indigo will be launched at the Brussels Jazz Festival on January 15th

NABOU LINKS CLICK HERE

Text by Fiona Ross


FUSION

BLACK MOUNTAIN JAZZ

Sarah Brown by Kasia Ociepa

We were absolutely thrilled to take our Women in Jazz Photography: Her Frame. Her Sound photography exhibition on tour this year.

Bringing together inspirational women from across the globe, our photography exhibition is a unique opportunity to celebrate women working in jazz both behind and in front of the camera. Inspirational moments in jazz captured by some of the incredible female photographers leading the way in jazz photography. Exhibiting legends such as Geri Allen, Abbey Lincoln, Alice Coltrane, Nina Simone to contemporary artists including Lakecia Benjamin, Nubya Garcia and Brandee Younger, there has never been an exhibition like this.

Our first stop was Abergvenny, Wales and the Black Mountain Jazz Festival.

The Black Mountain Jazz Club was formed in 2006 by Mike Skilton, a jazz lover, with the aim to bring quality live jazz to the heart of Abergavenny. The club has had a variety of venues, but settled at The Melville Centre for the Arts, an old Victorian Grammar School building with a fabulous blackout theatre with raised seating for 73 jazz lovers, the acoustics at The Melville are exceptional and musicians love to play here.

In 2023 Black Mountain Jazz became a charitable trust, working with 5 trustees and a range of volunteers who are all passionate about developing the club and widening its community links. The club nights and headline wall2wall Festival acts are at The Melville Theatre, but the community Sunday afternoon goes into town to coffee shops, bistros and lunch venues for a wide variety of performances, along with some covered busking areas. These events are supported by the town council and the rotary club and the concept is growing year on year. The festival is a truly beautiful community affair.

The exhibition features legendary and award-winning photographers from South Africa, New York, Poland and the United Kingdom, platforming the work of Monika S Jakubowska, Vuyo Giba, Tatiana Gorilovsky, Enid Farber and Kasia Ociepa.

Kasia Ociepa is the resident photographer at Black Mountain jazz and we thought it was high time we spent some time exploring her work with you. We asked Debs Hancock, trustee, promoter, curator and vocalist, about how she first met Kasia and what led her to joining the Black Mountain jazz team as festival photographer.

Black Mountain Jazz Club is a community-led organisation with links to a variety of local groups, including the Abergavenny Camera Club. Over the years many photographers have visited the club to take photographs, but Kasia's involvement has been something special. She first came to BMJ as a member of the Abergavenny Camera Club, but unlike other photographers she kept returning—month after month, year after year—and has become an important part of the fabric of BMJ.

Musicians love her work and truly appreciate receiving high-quality photographs of their performances. For a grassroots music venue with a limited budget, Kasia adds significant value to any jazz musician's decision to perform at our club.

Kasia's work was included in the WIJM exhibition. Do you have any favourite photos of hers that were included?

Where do I begin! Women in Jazz Media have very generously given us the opportunity to keep one of the exhibition photographs. Making that choice was far from easy, but it did encourage us to pause,

Ursula Harrison by Kasia Ociepa

Debs Hancock by Kasia Ociepa

"People spoke about the energy of the exhibition and loved the close-up view of the performers in action. They were in awe of the quality of the musicians represented and were delighted that the exhibition had been on display at The Melville. There was a real sense of loss when it came down, which reflects the magnitude of its presence. We are thrilled to have been part of its journey."

Debs Hancock BMJ Trustee

reflect and respond to the photographs. After much deliberation, we finally selected the photograph of BBC Young Jazz Musician of the Year 2024, Ursula Harrison, and we are delighted that it now takes pride of place at The Melville Theatre for evermore. She represents sheer talent, a unique artistic style and, as a composer in her own right, she is "holding the baton" and carrying jazz into the future in her own way. Thank you for your generosity.

How did the local community feel having 'one of their own' as part of the exhibition?

As an active community arts centre hosting a wide variety of cultural classes and events throughout the week, the exhibition at The Melville Centre was enjoyed by a large cross-section of age groups, and the feedback was fabulous.

Kasia is well known at the Centre, and her work with Black Mountain Jazz Club has been exhibited before at previous wall2wall Jazz Festivals. However, seeing her featured in such hallowed company—both on the walls and behind the lens—was thrilling for everyone. We are all immensely proud of her inclusion in the Women in Jazz Media project. This collaborative exhibition shone a light on Black Mountain Jazz Club, The Melville Centre and Abergavenny alike. That is just GREAT!

"The exhibition was obviously very wonderful to see in itself, but what felt most special was how it helped bring the Festival and The Melville Centre alive. I loved the conversations that were happening as people viewed the exhibition: about the photography, the musicians, women in jazz, and the history of jazz. To have Kasia's

Alex Clarke by Kasia Ociepa

Zoe Gilby by Kasia Ociepa

photography as part of the exhibition felt like it connected us even more, Abergavenny and Black Mountain Jazz, to the wider national and international jazz scene and community. "
Jayne Carter BMJ Trustee

In Conversation With Kasia Ociepa

I first picked up a camera as a teenager, when I got my own little film camera. My mum had always taken photos and developed her own pictures, so I grew up watching her and being fascinated by it. When I finally had my own camera, it felt like discovering a new way of seeing things. I never really had the chance to develop artistic skills like drawing or painting, so photography became the way I could express my creativity and my artistic side — noticing small details and capturing moments that felt meaningful. That simple film camera is really where my journey began.

How did you develop your skills as a photographer?

I'm largely self-taught, though I definitely had help along the way — especially from my son Sebastian, who's been one of my biggest supporters. I've always loved documenting the world around me. I'm the kind of person who wants to understand how things work, and photography became the perfect mix of curiosity, creativity, and technical challenge.

In my twenties, when I lived in Canada, I remember taking photos at Niagara Falls and surprising my friends with how good they turned out. That was one of the first moments I realised I might actually have an eye for this.

My early comfort zone was horticultural photography, which made sense because I worked professionally as a gardener. When I studied Garden Design at Capel Manor College between 2008 and 2010, everything shifted — I started using a DSLR instead of a phone, and I spent every break wandering around the college gardens taking photos of plants, flowers, garden layouts… and plant labels too, of course. I even got a summer job with Which? Gardening on site, which meant more time photographing gardens during the holidays. Photography also helped me personally. As a huge introvert with social anxiety, I used to walk around with my eyes down. But holding a camera made me look up. I started noticing shapes, textures, and architectural details while wandering through London — and that changed how I moved through the world.

When I later moved to Wales, I volunteered as a photographer for NGS Gwent. But after a while, horticultural photography became too comfortable. I wanted to push myself, so I joined a local camera club and picked up a whole new set of skills. In 2015, I joined my local camera club, and almost immediately I could see my skills improving. My understanding of the technical side of photography grew to a whole new level.

The real turning point came when I became the resident photographer for Black Mountain Jazz. The lighting was challenging, the musicians were constantly moving, and I often had no idea what settings to use. For my very first exhibition at the club, I had to convert many images to monochrome just to hide my mistakes. But I kept learning. Soon I understood the light, the pace, and how to anticipate those fleeting expressions, gestures, and moments of connection that make live music so powerful.

That experience — the steep learning curve, the improvement, and the joy of capturing something real and alive — gave me the confidence to finally turn my photography hobby into a business when I needed a

career change during the pandemic.
What drew you to photographing live music?

I've always loved music — it's been woven into my life for as long as I can remember. I even wanted to learn English simply because I wanted to understand the lyrics of the songs. So I think

music has been part of my path for a long time.

My journey into live music photography began in 2019, almost by accident. My local camera club went to photograph a gig at Black Mountain Jazz in Abergavenny, and my camera simply couldn't cope with the lighting. My own camera couldn't cope with the challenging lighting, so a colleague kindly lent me his spare one. I went back on my own in January 2020 — and I loved it so much that I just kept coming back. The club liked my photos and asked if I wanted to become their resident photographer… and that's how it all began … and that was the beginning of a completely new chapter for me.

The learning curve was steep. The lighting was unpredictable, the musicians never stayed still, and capturing an expressive, sharp moment felt like trying to catch lightning with a jar. But that challenge pushed me in all the right ways. Live music forced me to work faster, trust my instincts, read the room, and really understand light. It shaped the natural, candid style I use today.

I'm always hunting for something genuine — a glance, a gesture, the way a musician rests their hands on an instrument between songs, or that faraway look they get when *they're completely inside the music. Those quiet, human moments are my favourite. And then there's the atmosphere. Nothing dramatic or poetic — just that honest, warm energy that fills a room when everyone is listening together. The laughter, the tiny*

reactions, the audience leaning forward for a favourite tune… capturing all of that feels incredibly rewarding.

Photography and music are two of my biggest passions, and live gigs let me experience both at once. I get to listen, feel, and create — all in the same moment. And I've found a real sense of community through it: organisers, musicians, volunteers, audiences. People who love live music as much as I do.

And of course… the music itself. I'm lucky to photograph a venue that brings in extraordinary musicians. I often catch myself tapping my foot, swaying a little, humming along. Sometimes I even get emotional behind the camera and hope no one notices.

Live music photography has opened up a world of new artists, new genres, new sounds — and I feel incredibly grateful that my camera led me into it.

Are there any photographers whose work has inspired you? Or any other photographers you would like to mention?

My photographic style has always developed quite naturally, so I wasn't shaped by one particular photographer early on. Instead, my inspiration has mostly come from observing the world around me, experimenting, and figuring out what feels most authentic to me.

That said, I have recently discovered a photographer whose work truly inspires me: Tatiana Gorilovsky.

I absolutely love the way she photographs musicians — her use of light trails is stunning, full of movement and emotion. Every time I see one of her images, I think, " wow." One day, I'd love to learn how to create something like that in my own work.

When it comes to my own artistic development, I naturally gravitate towards colour photography. Life is full of colour, and I want my images to reflect that energy. I love shallow depth of field, storytelling, and those small intentional details that draw the viewer in.

Over the years, I think I've also developed a kind of photographer's "sixth sense." Sometimes I'll be walking and suddenly feel the urge to look up or turn around — and there it is, a moment or detail I would have missed otherwise. It's as if an extra part of my brain is always quietly scanning for something interesting.

I enjoy experimenting too — ICM, in-camera multiple exposures, and the occasional bit of fine-art editing when I'm in that mood. My background in garden design taught me the rules of composition, but I'm equally happy to bend or break them when the image calls for it.
So while I didn't begin with one major influence, I continue to be inspired by creative photographers like Tatiana — and by the world around me — always nudging me to evolve, explore, and refine my own visual voice.

I moved to the UK in October 2006, starting my journey in London. There were a few reasons behind my move. Earlier in my twenties, I'd lived in Canada, and after returning to Poland, I found myself looking at the world through a different pair of eyes. In 1993, I had the chance to work in the UK as an interpreter for a few weeks, and I remember falling completely in love with this country. From that moment on, I always hoped I would return and eventually settle here.

Like many people, economic circumstances were part of what pushed me to make that move. After a long wait, I finally arrived in London with a dream: I wanted to study garden design. When I was made redundant in 2008, I decided to take that opportunity and go for it. I completed my course in 2010.

Once I finished my diploma, I realised it was time for a slower pace of life. I loved London, but deep down I've always been a countryside person. With my qualification in hand, it became easier to find work outside the city, and I eventually moved to the beautiful county of Monmouthshire in South East Wales.

I've now lived here for 15 years, and I still pinch myself that this is home. The landscape here has a kind of quiet magic — soft hills that stretch into the distance, hedgerows buzzing with life, winding lanes, big skies, and that unmistakable Welsh sense of calm. It's a place that feels spacious, green, grounding, and wonderfully therapeutic — a bright, inspiring haven — and I'm genuinely grateful every day that this is where I ended up.
I absolutely love the cloud inversion — or,

more poetically, a dragon's breath. Where I live, I'm surrounded by hills and mountains, and believe me, the most magical feeling is being on top of a ridge and seeing the valley below covered in a soft, milky layer, with the occasional peak poking through and the sun shining above.

How did you first connect with Black Mountain Jazz Festival?

My connection with Black Mountain Jazz began in January 2020, when I photographed my very first gig at the club. I enjoyed it so much that I soon returned, and not long after, I was invited to become their resident photographer — something I still feel incredibly grateful for.
A few months later, the pandemic arrived and changed everything. The annual wall2wall Jazz Festival was scheduled for the summer, but with all the restrictions, having a live audience at The Melville Theatre was impossible. Instead of cancelling, the club came up with a creative solution: if people couldn't experience the festival in person, they would film it and bring the festival to the audience.
I was asked to photograph the musicians and a series of interviews to be included in the filmed festival. So my introduction to the famous wall2wall Jazz Festival was not your typical bustling, live, full-house experience — …it was me, a camera, musicians, the wonderful Black Mountain Jazz team, sound and video technicians, and guests arriving for their interviews., and a lot of hand sanitiser.

It was certainly an unusual beginning, but a memorable one — and it marked the start of a collaboration I'm still very happy to be part of.

We are thrilled to have your photographs in our exhibition! Can you tell us about the photos you chose and why you chose them?

It was a huge surprise to learn that you wanted to include my photographs alongside so many talented and well-known female photographers, and I feel truly honoured.
I chose photographs that felt the most

Hannah Horton by Kasia Ociepa

"alive" to me — images that don't just show a performance, but pull you into it. I also wanted to use my most recent work, partly because my technique has improved, and partly because I'm a bit of a perfectionist: the photos had to be sharp, in focus, and genuinely able to hold a viewer's attention.

When selecting them, I looked for those small, powerful moments — a hand gesture, an expression, a fleeting smile, eye contact with the audience, or a musician completely lost in their own world. I love those moments when an artist is "in the zone" (or taking five!) and everything else fades away. Jazz is full of these little human details, and capturing them is one of my favourite things.

I didn't focus on specific musicians or particular performances — instead, I chose images that made me pause for a moment when I first reviewed them. If they made me stop, I hoped they might do the same for someone walking through the exhibition. But I have to admit that both Mike Skilton and I agreed there was one person who absolutely had to be a part of this exhibition — Debs Hancock, an essential part of the Black Mountain Jazz Club. Not only is she a wonderful friend, but she is also an extraordinary singer and performer. Her voice has a way of drawing you in completely; when she sings, you feel every note, every nuance, every emotion. Her presence on stage is magnetic — you can't help but be pulled into her world, captivated by her energy and the stories she tells through her music.

Life as a photographer – any challenges?

Being a photographer is incredibly rewarding, but it comes with its challenges. One of the main ones is unpredictability — lighting, timing, and human behaviour rarely cooperate, especially at live gigs or weddings. You have to be ready for anything, and that keeps me on my toes! Another challenge is finding the balance between creativity and client expectations. I always want my images to tell a story and reflect my style, but at the same time, I need to meet what clients are looking for. It's a constant learning process — and occasionally a gentle reminder that I'm not a mind reader (yet!).

I've also just recently become a professional photographer, so I'm still building my client base. The market is very saturated, and most work comes through word-of-mouth. Being a foreigner with few local connections and a naturally introverted personality makes it harder, so I have to admit, I'm still finding clients.

Then there's editing and post-production — I love it, but hours can fly by while my coffee goes cold! Putting your work out there can feel vulnerable, especially when not every photo hits the mark.
Despite all the challenges, I genuinely love what I do. Photography allows me to see the world in a different way, notice little moments others might miss, and tell stories without words. Every shoot teaches me something new, and every challenge is an opportunity to grow — and sometimes even laugh at yourself along the way.

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

I'm the kind of person who always needs to be doing something — I can't just sit still and do nothing. I love learning, experimenting, and keeping my creative brain busy. When the creative juices are flowing, I feel most like myself. So yes, there are plenty of ideas and projects I want to explore next year!
I want to finally step properly into the world of video. It's so different from still photography — new settings, new ways of thinking, and a whole new type of storytelling. There's a lot to learn, but

I'm looking forward to stretching myself creatively.

And there's one particular area I'm especially drawn to: drone photography and videography. Seeing the world from above feels almost magical — suddenly familiar places look completely different, like you're discovering them for the first time. Fields turn into patchwork, rivers become ribbons, and mountains look like sleeping giants. Even with the early footage I've taken, I still catch myself saying "oh wow!" every time I review it. I can't wait to explore that perspective more deeply and bring it into my work.

I'm also planning to spend more time developing my fine art photography. Starting with a regular photo and transforming it with textures, brushes, blend modes, and layers opens up a whole new world — the final image often ends up looking more like a painting than a photograph. It's endlessly creative, and I'd love to push that style further. Alongside that, I want to experiment more with in-camera multiple exposure, which lets me create dreamy, layered images straight from the camera.

Another project I hope to revisit is something I started a few years ago, when I photographed medieval buildings for a friend's website, medievalheritage.eu. I'm fascinated by old architecture, especially the smaller countryside churches — the quiet ones tucked away behind hedgerows or hidden in valleys. I often find myself standing in front of them thinking, "if only the walls could talk." There's so much history in those stones, and I'd love to continue exploring that theme.

I've also begun a slightly quirky and fun project called "Concentration Tongue" (also known as motor overflow). It's that little thing people do when they're deeply focused — the tongue peeking out without them even realising it. A lot of musicians do it on stage, and once you notice it, you can't unsee it. It's a tiny detail, but it always makes me smile.

So yes — I know more ideas will come (they always do!), but for now I have plenty to keep my creative brain happily occupied, and I can't wait to see what unfolds next.

KASIA LINKS CLICK HERE

BLACK MOUNTAIN JAZZ LINKS CLICK HERE

Text by Fiona Ross

Kat Rees by Kasia Ociepa

Photo by Krystal Pagán

A VOICE FOR GENERATIONS: THE UNSTOPPABLE JOURNEY OF MELANIE SCHOLTZ

BY SHIREEN FISHER

South African-born, New York-based jazz musician and visual artist, Melanie Scholtz's schedule has been packed with performances, educational commitments at 92 NY, and the promotion of her two new albums, Seven and Sweet Nancy. She made time to share insights into her incredible journey from Cape Town to global jazz stages, her passion for education, and the power of collaboration.

In the world of contemporary jazz, few voices possess the depth, versatility, and historical connection of Melanie Scholtz. This South African-born, multi-award-winning singer and composer has consistently proven that her artistry transcends genre and geography. Her foundation is classical, having started piano at age five and graduated Cum Laude from the University of Cape Town with a Performer's Diploma in Opera in 2000. Yet, her soul speaks the universal language of jazz.

Melanie has released seven successful solo albums and cemented her status as an international powerhouse. The accolades began rolling in early, including winning "Best Jazz Vocalist" at the Old Mutual Jazz Encounters in 2002. She received a major national honour in 2010 when she was named the Standard Bank Young Artist for Jazz. Just two years later, her global appeal was indisputable when she swept up the Jury Prize, the RTL Prize, and the Public Prize at the prestigious Jazz Revelations competition at the Jazz a Juan Festival in Nice, France in 2012.

Melanie's discography as a leader includes: Zillion Miles (2006), Connected (2010), Living Standards (2010), Freedom Child (2013), and Our Time (2013). Her album, Freedom's Child, stands as a profound work of cultural significance, fusing her music with the iconic poems of Anti-Apartheid activist James Matthews to ensure the struggles of Apartheid resonate with a new generation of South Africans.

Her feature credits span two decades, beginning notably in 2001 with Jimmy Dludlu's Afrocentric. Subsequent collaborations include a run of European recordings like Ivan Mazuze's Maganda (2009), Inkala's Live in Varanger (2010), and contributions to multiple albums by Sverre Gjørvad and Marco Miro. Her featured work this decade highlights a contemporary approach to the genre, including the intimate 2022 release Kindred, a dedicated Bass and Voice project with Jo Skaansar, and her appearance on Small Kingdom (2022), underscoring her commitment to projects that explore unique sonic textures and cross-cultural dialogue.

She has brought her artistry to stages across the world, from South Africa, the Czech Republic, and France to Norway, Sweden, and the United States. She has collaborated with the best in the field: performing alongside Kurt Elling at the Joy of Jazz festival in Johannesburg (2012), sharing the stage with the late Hugh Masekela and the Cape Town Philharmonic (2015), and jamming with Bobby McFerrin

at the Anjazz Jazz festival in Norway (2011). More recently, she collaborated with Christian McBride in June 2024 as part of the Discover Music series at 92 NY in New York City.

Her significant international profile was further amplified when she was chosen to be a featured artist in The Great South African Songbook Tour with Wynton Marsalis and The Jazz at Lincoln Centre from September 2019 to February 2020, featuring performances in New York, Chicago, Johannesburg, and Vienna.

Currently based in New York City, Melanie has been signed to The Ropeadope, AfrikArise label and has marked the start of a new chapter with two major releases. The first of these, Seven, recorded in Johannesburg with her original trio (featuring and produced by fellow Standard Bank Young Artist winner Bokani Dyer), was released on September 30, 2024. The second, Sweet Nancy, an album inspired by Nancy Wilson and co-produced by Grammy-winner Adonis Rose in the birthplace of jazz, New Orleans, was released on March 7, 2025.

Beyond the spotlight, Melanie is deeply committed to nurturing the next generation of artists. She was a performer and teacher at the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown (2008 to 2014), mentored through the Artscape Youth Jazz program (2006 to 2013), and taught at the University of Cape Town (2004 to 2005). She continues this work today, serving as a teaching artist and curriculum writer for the cultural organisation 92 NY, where she has been for the past eight years.

Your musical journey began formally at a young age, with piano lessons, and you later graduated cum laude in opera from UCT. Can you reflect on those early years and classical training? How did that rigorous background shape your discipline and technique, and what role does it still play in your approach to jazz and contemporary music today?

I am truly grateful for the sacrifices my parents made for me to have an incredible music education.

All my teachers and mentors were truly virtuosic and extremely passionate and generous in sharing their life and performance wisdom with me. I know that even though classical singing/opera was so perfectionistic and meticulous; the precision you need technically always seems elusive. But it truly taught me dedication, performance authenticity and delivery. Control and technique - it gives a finishing that definitely elevates your artistry. It gives you the "chops" and hence the freedom to do whatever you want to do in every other genre.

After a strong foundation in opera, you made the transition to becoming a jazz vocalist, earning significant accolades like the Standard Bank Young Artist award. What specifically drew you to jazz, and what was the defining moment or realisation that shifted your focus to this genre?

I started studying opera as a way to train my voice to the highest level. Also to learn more about theatre and performance. Also to protect my instrument through technique. My father was the reason I started using that technique to sing jazz. He reminded me that this same technique could be used to sing and express myself as a singer/musician and songwriter singing music that celebrated afro/black genres of music. So, when I was singing Mozart, he reminded me that I could sing Donna Lee, by Charlie Parker, with the same technique but with a jazz inflection and approach. He was always reminding me of our rich heritage and contribution to the world as

Photo by Krystal Pagán

Photo by Krystal Pagán

black people. *I realised a freedom in jazz that I never found in any other genre.*

Having achieved significant success and recognition in South Africa, what were the major personal and creative catalysts that led to your decision to relocate, first to Europe, and eventually to New York City?

I love South Africa dearly and I am very grateful to all the musicians who allowed me to be part of their journey and vice versa. This really shaped me. SA became too far away geographically and I was starting to tour in Europe - particularly the Czech Republic - more often so relocation was definitely inevitable. I also reached a ceiling in SA. New York found me mainly because of a relationship and I moved here because truthfully, love it or hate it there's no place like New York on the planet. For artists, it's the Mecca for everything artistic and eclectic.

For South African artists who dream of an international career, what is the reality versus the expectation of establishing a musical base in a city as vast and competitive as New York? What essential lessons have you learned about resilience and sustaining your career in that environment?

Listen, New York is obsessed with youth and coming here at the age of 38, wasn't the easiest thing. I have been so fortunate to be South African, as I feel like that has definitely set me apart musically and culturally. I haven't lost my accent either, ha! The eight years here have taught me to say yes to opportunities, even if it meant having to learn the skills along the way. And that you need to be about hustling. This doesn't mean stepping on others to get where you need to be. But NYC isn't for the wallflowers.

Your latest album, Seven, marks a reunion with key South African collaborators, alongside new contributions from US musicians. How did the energy of this blended ensemble - rooted in your history but looking forward - influence the musical dynamic and the writing process for this project?

I had written most of the songs in the seven-year period of being in New York, coloured by the life experiences here, being an immigrant and starting my life over yet again. There was a sense of safety in the past, in the form of my original trio, Benjamin Jephta, Marlon Witbooi and Bokanie Dyer, helping bring this album to life, yet also collaborating with some musicians who had become part of my new life. It was like having a tree with old roots but new branches. Divine timing at its best.

You often utilise your skills as the 'Lone Looper.' On Seven, you layer your voice to create a powerful chorus of female solidarity, notably on tracks like 'Same Black Magic.' Can you elaborate on the creative decision to employ these multi-tracked vocal arrangements, and what kind of narrative strength they add to the album?

I have always believed that what set us apart from all other countries in the world as South Africans was how we sang, our vocal timbre, our arrangements. How we sang with our ears and blended the harmonies in a particular way. I was always inspired by that. It's what makes us unique. So, I carry that wherever I go on the planet and the looping machine has been transformative for me. It's revolutionised how I create songs and how I make paint with the voice.

Your vocal delivery is often described as possessing a conversational intimacy and crystalline clarity. How do you approach songwriting and arrangement to ensure the material serves to facilitate this direct,

personal connection with the listener?

My Dad always used to say that everyone knew what was happening in my life through my songs. I don't hide anything. If anything, I write to reveal the truth and to heal myself from an experience, in the hope that I will soothe a like-minded soul that could feel less alone knowing I have gone through a similar experience. My songs have been a remedy to me. The song Remedy - in fact, most of the songs on Seven actually - is an ode to Music and God. The songs could pertain to relationships, as well, though.

The album Sweet Nancy is an homage to Nancy Wilson. Why Nancy? What was the moment or memory that crystallised the decision for you to dedicate an entire recording project to her music, and what specific qualities of her artistry do you feel resonate most deeply with your own voice and philosophy?

Once again, it was my father that introduced me to the gorgeous and gifted Miss Nancy Wison. I was compared to her quite early on in my career in terms of my similarity in vocal colour. I never dreamt of having her emotional maturity when interpreting a song, but I think age and heartbreak give you this. She is a storyteller and her phrasing is always unique and progressive. She stood out and she meant to.

The selection of songs on Sweet Nancy focuses largely on the more romantic and lush side of Wilson's repertoire. How did you balance paying tribute to her classic material while ensuring your interpretations remained distinctly your own?

It's a tough balance really because you want to be able to really do her justice for die hard fans but still add your spin on it. So working with different arrangers and changing tempos or keys, as well as adding introductions that are unique but don't stray too far from her aesthetic.

The song 'The Old Country' on the tribute album has been noted for its powerful, contemporary re-envisioning. In light of global migratory stories, what was your intention in giving this particular standard a renewed, modern significance?

This song has always been one of my favourites and I had recorded it on another one of my releases called Living Standards, as a swing. This time, a bolero or latin flavoured vibe felt right to give the piece a new face. I wanted it to have a diasporal flavour and the Latin direction felt apt.

In addition to your recorded work, you have been actively involved in teaching and collaboration, including projects with groups like Nation Beat and Jazz at Lincoln Center. How does this mentoring and collaborative work outside of leading your own album projects fuel your creativity and shape your overall mission as an artist?

I really love working as an artist to preserve culture, and working with Nation Beat and Jazz at Lincoln Centre always feels like keeping the ancestors close - as they should be. I have a new non-profit called Primal Voice and I am really excited about using all the skills I have acquired in my time here to give back to our global communities. Our artistry doesn't belong to us. It belongs to God. It is given to us as a way to bring light here on earth. My granny always told me this.

You maintain a separate creative discipline as a visual artist, focusing on mixed-media collage. How do you manage the dual focus between your work as a vocalist and your visual art, and how do these two distinct artistic practices inform or challenge one another?

Visual art really came to me as a way to

have a safe and non-professional space to practice art and art making. I am so grateful for it, as I don't judge myself as harshly. It helps me relax and sometimes the worlds intertwine and intersect. A blessing! It's hard to find time to dedicate to both as well as teaching but I find making a list and also just hibernating and going into hermit mode helps me focus.

Looking to the future, what are the next significant artistic territories you wish to explore, both as a vocalist and as a composer? Are there any specific new projects or artistic directions you are planning that you can share with Women in Jazz Media readers?

I definitely would love to do a solo voice album with the Lone Looper Project. My dream is to make an album produced by Jonathan Butler - just dreaming in technicolor! With regards to my non-profit, Primal Voice, I hope to give those a voice in terms of telling their story throughout the world.

Your story is your superpower!

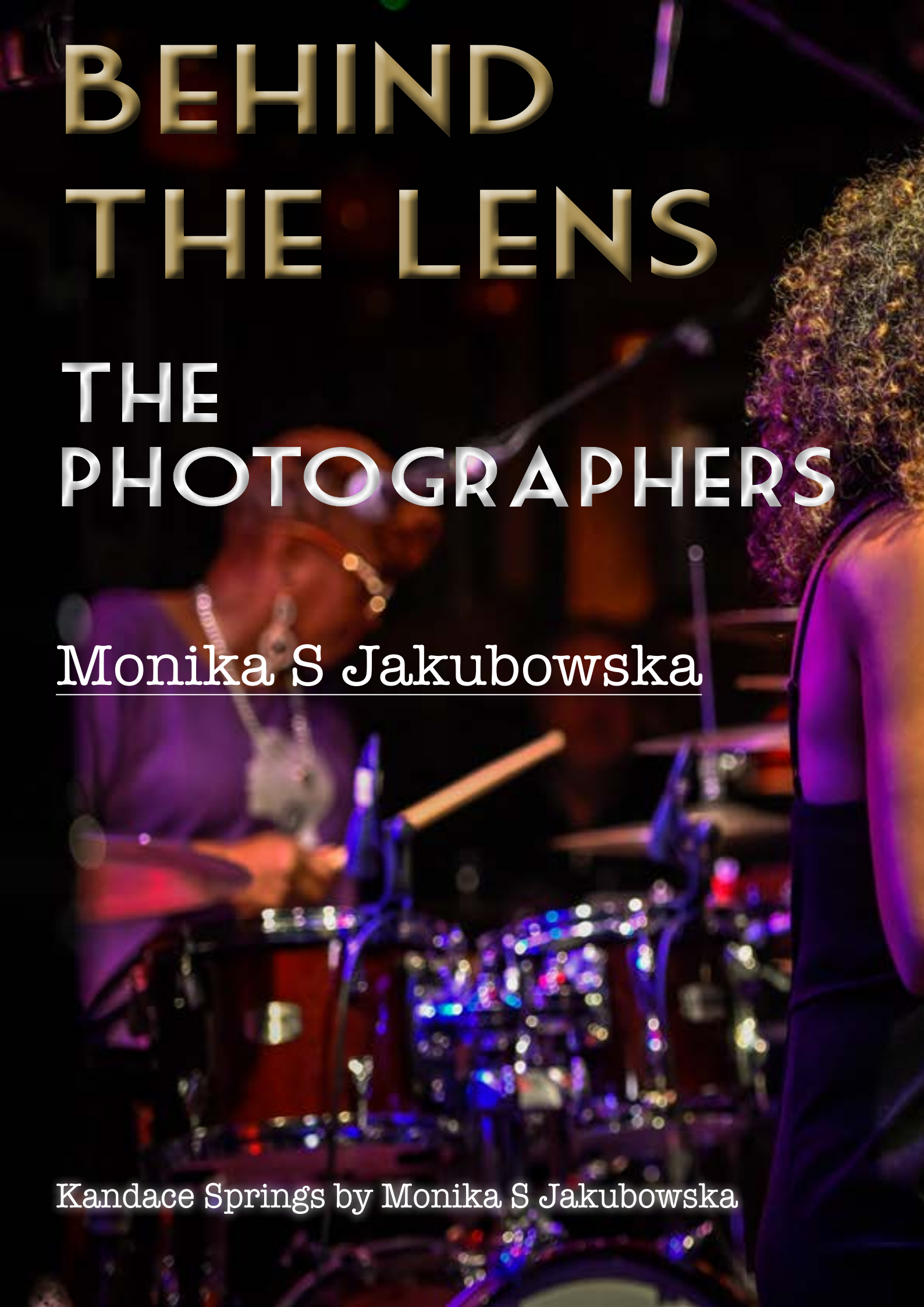
MELANIE LINKS CLICK HERE

SHIREEN LINKS CLICK HERE

BEHIND THE LENS

THE PHOTOGRAPHERS

Monika S Jakubowska



Kandace Springs by Monika S Jakubowska

Kandace Springs, Caylen Bryant and Camille Gainer by Monika S Jakubowska


Caylen Bryant by Monika S Jakubowska


Camille Gainer by Monika S Jakubowska


Janette Mason by Monika S Jakubowska


YAMAHA


Salin by Monika S Ja

akubowska

Josiane Rouette (Oscar Laroue)
by Monika S Jakubowska

SACHA BOUTROS

Photos by Matt Baker

THE MOVING FORCE OF SACHA BOUTROS

Jazz vocalist, composer and producer Sacha Boutros is a moving force. The depth and diversity of her global experiences shape not only her artistry but her passion for bringing communities together and breaking down barriers.

Raised in San Diego, USA, with Mexican and French Lebanese heritage and now living in Paris, she has been surrounded by a beautiful and rich mix of cultures all of her life. As a businesswoman, she founded her own label, production and publishing company 'Hear Me Roar' and the pop-up organisation Sacha's Supper Club, as well as countless community projects. Sacha uses music to shine a light on the unheard and to build communities and ensure people are seen.

Never one to fit into a box, Sacha sees the beauty in not conforming. After being diagnosed with cancer, this really came to the forefront.

I'm trying to build bridges in the industry where there are a lot of walls and a lot of boxes. I'm trying to open all the boxes. I realised that growing up, I didn't match anybody. I made my hair blonde, I tried to look whiter…I tried to fit in all the time and I realised that actually the beauty is in not fitting in. Because if we were all the same, that would be so boring.

After getting cancer, I really understood it. I thought that the industry had a mould and that we had to adhere to all the rules inside of the lines of that mould, but I realised that I wasn't happy. I wasn't happy internally and spiritually. I kept trying to be something I wasn't. I've always done things a little bit differently, made a lot of waves and crossed over genres, but I think that it's really over the last five years from the understanding of having a near death experience and then a stroke and then cancer twice. My life is really precious. Every human's life is very precious, and it's a gift.

That must have been so very empowering, that moment when you truly realised you didn't need to fit in a box. Your resilience is an inspiration!

Feels good. But, where's my place though? In jazz, for example some people think I'm a Broadway singer, some think I'm an opera singer or I'm a jazz singer, or not jazzy enough. All the comments fly around but I think it's all about finding your place. I really like the way I am, but sometimes it is hard as an artist, when you hear a lot of comments and so many opinions. It's hard to block them all out so that you can stay focused and go forward.

Staying focussed and confident in this industry is a challenge, but Sacha absolutely leads the way in resilience and inspiration. Known in France as "La Reine du Jazz" (The Jazz Queen) her latest album Sacha: Paris After Dark not only showcases her love and understanding of Paris and the Parisienne lifestyle, but showcases the passion she has for the cross cultural exchange of music.

It is a specific bridge between France and the United States. We have such a long history and I wanted to tell that

story. I wanted to tell the story of the immigrant on that album, which is so important especially with what's going on in my country right now. I am a child of immigrants. And I'm a new American, I'm an immigrant in France. And so for me, the album is that bridge to talk about the immigrant story. And that story is Serge Gainsbourg, who walked around Paris with the Jewish yellow star on his grey jacket because he was persecuted for being different, for being Jewish. It's telling the story of Cole Porter, because he came here and he wrote a lot of music but he also joined his lover and wasn't allowed to be outwardly gay here. This is the story of all the people that don't fit in the box. 'In The Still of the Night' isn't about 'oohh, I'm such a cool songwriter' It's about 'I'm gay and I've had to be quiet my whole life about it, and this is a silent wish to be with somebody that I'm deeply in love with that may never materialise the way I want'. It's all the people that didn't fit in a box. Dalida didn't fit in a box. She came from a war-torn Italy to Egypt and then moved to France and she has an accent when she sings on all of her recordings. She recorded in 13 languages.

It's every person's story.

Joe Dassin was from America. He was Jewish. He was busking on the street. His parents were famous, but he couldn't make it and they didn't understand his music, thought it was boring. But then he moved to France and he became famous. Charlie Chaplin, spent a lot of time in Paris but he was blacklisted from the United States and all he wanted to do was make people laugh and bring peace to the world. None of these people fit in the box. So this is how I wanted to tell everybody's story. It's not really my story. It's all of our stories. It's the story of being a woman in this industry. It's being a Jewish man, a gay man, an immigrant. It's being all of these things.

It's about trying to find your place in the world and to find your voice.

The stunning musicians on the new album, enhances the feeling of unity with French and French/American musicians, including trumpeter Stéphane Belmondo (Michel Legrand/Stéphane Grappelli, Gil Evans, Yusef Lateef), pianist Franck Amsallem

(Joshua Redman, Gerry Mulligan, Ravi Coltrane), guitarist Hugo Lippi (Samara Joy, Melody Gardot, Christian McBride), bassist Thomas Bramerie (Chet Baker, Toots Thielemans, Dee Dee Bridgewater) and Madagascar-born drummer Tony Rabeson (Toots Thielemans, Joe Lovano, Lee Konitz).

I like to go in with my After Dark series by going into the city, the sound of the city, the people that make up that city - the people that are well known after dark. I did this with my New York After Dark album. Stephane Belmondo is a very well known flugelhorn/ Trumpeter, he's a star here and I had met him when I first moved here and he was really kind to me. So I said to him, when I do my project, would you play on it? He said of course and we became very dear friends. He introduced me to Thomas, Hugo was my neighbour, and I'd been working with Franck for a long time. So, it was more about friendship for this record. That's how I chose the guys. They were friends and so there was a connection, and it makes a difference.

We did a peace and cultural unity tour starting in Seattle, going to Long Beach, LA, Palm Springs, we went all over. We also added a bunch of songs that were American, Neil Diamond's 'September Morn' - it's a French song! 'Oh What A Night' is a French song! It's a little education for the Americans because they don't always know where things come from. Paris closed the chapter of that tour, it came full cycle. I'm releasing it with the full French packaging in February.

Unsurprisingly audiences are loving the album. The album went straight to the top of the iTunes chart in Mexico, and live audiences have found a true connection with the material and importantly, with Sacha's artistry.

It's really beautiful because a lot of people have travelled or have dreamt of going to Paris, and so when you play them this soundtrack, this little energy imprint of Paris after dark, they feel like they're in Paris. It's nice because you are taking them somewhere with the music. A musical passport.

Paris has long been known as an exciting creative space for artists. The rich history of art that has been created over the years is incredible. Not just the stories that are often told, but the behind the scenes narratives. To end, I asked Sacha why she thinks Paris is such a creative haven.

The energy. *Something happens and it's very grounding. I live on top of the cathedral, next to the cathedral in Montmartre and its Roman ground, a Roman spring and I feel it. It feels old. Erik Satie wrote 'Gnossiennes' across the street from me. I can see from my house, the Renoir house where he painted all his pictures… there's this electricity. My Dad used to tell me all about Paris when I was a kid. He would say when you get off the plane, you can feel it and I said, what does it feel like, Dad? He used to say every time I get off the plane to Paris, I get chicken skin. You know you're in Paris, you can feel it. The hair stands up on the back of my head.*

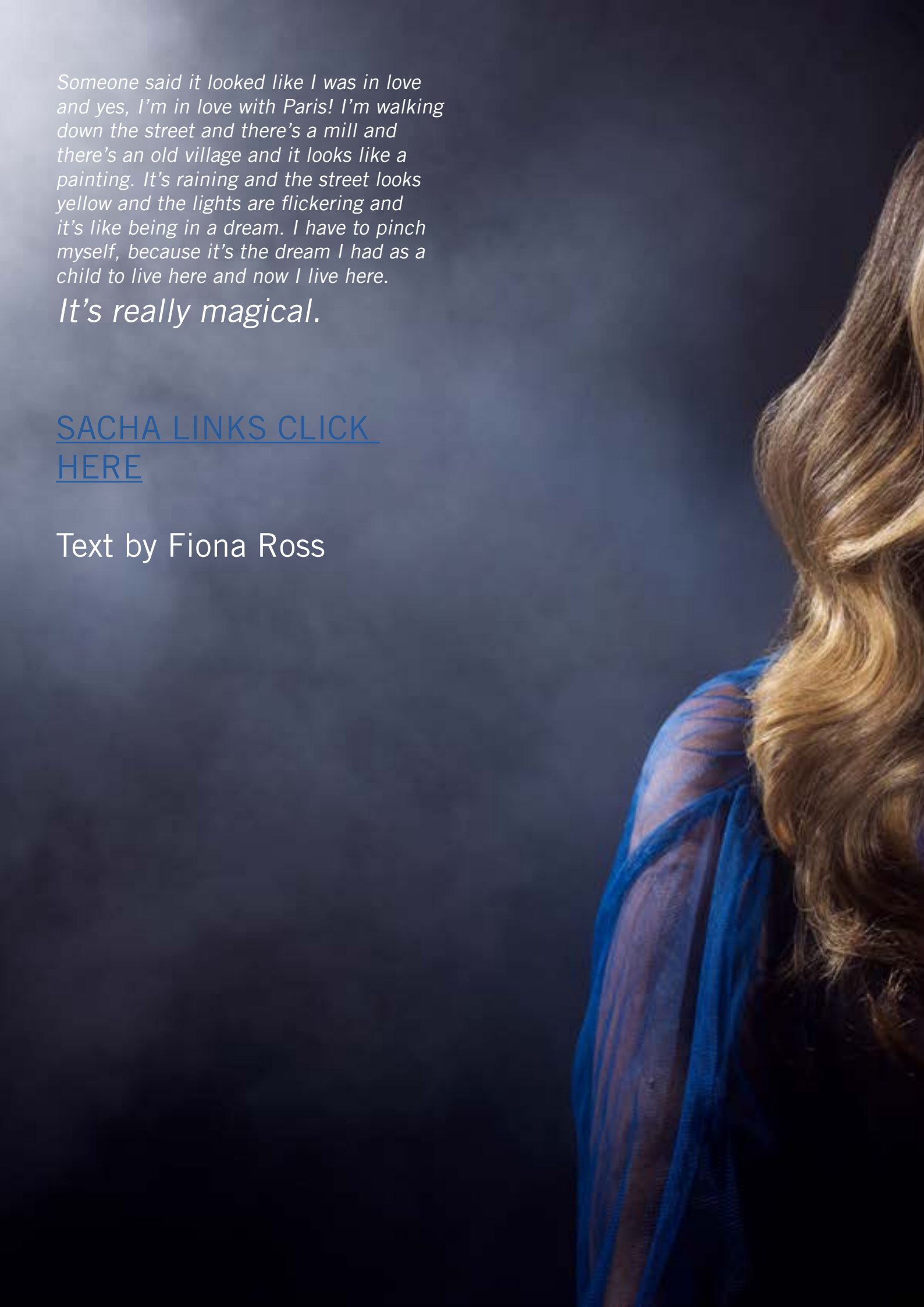
I've noticed that when I spend time in New York I write a lot, but here, in Paris, I write a lot more, most of us do. But there's a current in Paris and you can have that high buzz or you can have the low buzz. Paris has one of the highest suicide rates in the whole world and the feeling of loneliness that this city has makes you also want to write about all those things. I have experienced both sides, that euphoria and the bottom. I realised that you have to fill your soul with something. But when you do, it is magnetic and electric. When you're in a good space here and you want to create, you get creative ideas all the time and there's always something inspiring.

Someone said it looked like I was in love and yes, I'm in love with Paris! I'm walking down the street and there's a mill and there's an old village and it looks like a painting. It's raining and the street looks yellow and the lights are flickering and it's like being in a dream. I have to pinch myself, because it's the dream I had as a child to live here and now I live here.

It's really magical.

SACHA LINKS CLICK HERE

Text by Fiona Ross



J STEPS

ALL PHOTOS BY NICK SLEEP

This is the third in an interview series with the J Steps members, getting to know what it's like to be part of the band! In this entry, we are interviewing: Lily Walpole (LW), Josie Horton (JH) and Izzie Bishop (IB)

Why did you join J Steps?

LW: I joined J Steps because I had recently started playing jazz piano and I really liked the idea of being able to play in an ensemble.

JH: I decided to try out for J Steps a couple of years ago after me and my friend saw the poster. I hadn't really tried improvising before, or playing much jazz so was really excited for the opportunity. It was also the only all-female and non-binary music group I'd seen and seemed like a friendly environment to play and perform with.

IB: When I first started playing in a jazz band a few years ago I was the only girl surrounded by boys. Then one of my very close friends suggested J-steps as it was an all girls jazz band. This concept really appealed to me so I decided to go for an audition and really hoped I would get a place as I enjoyed playing with the group so much because I found it such a welcoming and energetic environment to play it. As well as this, Hannah is an incredible leader as she really inspires me to challenge myself as a musician.

What have you got out of J Steps since joining?

LW: I have improved my jazz improvisation and sight reading chords on the piano.

JH: J Steps has helped me grow my confidence when playing so much. Two years ago, I was a bit terrified of playing a solo in front of the others but being in an open group where everyone is in the same boat takes off the pressure and now I really enjoy improvising. Learning more about music and jazz theory from Hannah has been really helpful and means I can take what I've learnt and use it to improve my playing in general. Also, there have been so many exciting opportunities to perform in a whole range of venues that I wouldn't have had the chance to otherwise.

IB: J-steps has helped me to grow as a musician as I've learned to listen to not just my own part but the entire ensemble. As well as this, J-steps has pushed me to be more creative and confident when improvising so I am more confident expressing myself.

What's it like playing in an all female line up?

LW: I really enjoy playing in an all female group because I think it encourages girls and young women to pursue what they love. Also there are very few female jazz musicians so I think that J Steps is a good thing to improve equality in the jazz world.

JH: It's super cool to play in an all-female group, and something I hadn't seen at all before joining J Steps. I find I can really relax in rehearsals, and being in such a non-judgmental environment is the reason I've been able to develop my playing. Compared to other groups I've played in, J Steps has a really unique dynamic and I think the supportive feel lets us be more creative when we perform.

IB: I personally really enjoy playing in an all female lineup as I feel everyone is more connected and so supportive of each other which you may not get elsewhere. We have lots of fun and enjoy getting to know each other better in the breaks, often through our love of biscuits and Pringles!


IZZIE BISHOP


JOSIE HORTON (LEFT)


LILY WALPOLE
FP-4
Roland

Would you like to continue performing as a career?

LW: Personally I don't think that I will perform as a career, but I would like to continue playing music alongside whatever I choose to do next. For example, in later life, I could play the piano at open jazz clubs in the evenings. J Steps has allowed me to see this.

JH: Although I don't think I'll continue music as a career, I definitely don't want to stop playing the saxophone. Playing and performing music is one of the best creative outlets and it's been a great way of meeting new people and sharing ideas. I'm going to miss playing in the group when I turn 18 and hope I'll get the chance to play in one as close as J Steps at university or in the future.

IB: Yes definitely! I think that music plays a huge role in my life and I would love to continue it in the future either through teaching, playing or performing. Ideally all of them!

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT JSTEPS HERE

Text by Isabel Marquez

TORI - "MISOGYNY LINGERS ON"

We welcome guest contributors and supporters and were delighted when Mike Gerber reached out to us asking if we would be interested in a contribution from him. Of course, we said yes!

Mike is a London-based journalist and author of Kosher Jammers: Jewish connections in jazz -- Volume 1 the USA (Vinyl Vanguard, 2024). Volume 2 of Kosher Jammers will cover the rest of the world. Gerber's music journalism includes features in: We Jazz, Cadence, fRoots, Songlines, Long Live Vinyl, IAJRC Journal and other publications, and he presented a regular show on UK Jazz Radio. His work has also featured in the Guardian, the Observer, the Financial Times, New Statesman, City Limits, Lloyds List, Jewish Socialist, and on Channel 4 websites.

PHOTO BY ROB BLACKHAM

I was honoured to be one of the male contributors to a book that was published last year, Candid: Conversations on Women in the Music Industry. The main contributors were women, but Sammy Stein, its author, was keen to include the reflections of men who might have something useful to say on her theme.

The reason Sammy invited my input was because she had learned of a chapter in my own book, Kosher Jammers: Jewish connections in jazz – Volume 1 The USA. Titled The Gender Trap, that chapter covered some of the issues, particularly the struggles that female jazz instrumentalists have encountered in gaining the recognition, respect and opportunities that their male counterparts have enjoyed.

For Candid however, Sammy, although one of her previous books was Women in Jazz, requested my reflections on women in the music profession generally. That meant I was only able to mention in passing an eminent jazz musician who lives in my part of London, the tenor saxophonist Tori Freestone, whom I contacted seeking her insights as a woman instrumentalist active in jazz today. Her response was extensive but before I come to that, some context.

Historically, there has been a tendency for male jazz instrumentalists to regard jazz singing – a field where women have predominated – somewhat disdainfully, although the most revered vocalists – Bessie, Billie, Ella, some others – have won adoration for their contribution. The most disparaged were the "canaries", the singers that fronted the big bands of the 1930s and 1940s who were viewed as commercially necessary appendages to the guys in the orchestra.

Professional female instrumentalists were even in the bad old days, usually in the patronisingly marketed 'girl bands'. The most famous of these was the International Sweethearts of Rhythm. Founded in the United States in the 1930s, the Sweethearts, playing solid big band swing, flourished during world war two when there was a shortage of male musicians on the home front.

Rare was the female jazz player that male jazz historians and critics deigned to mention in their writings. The prime exception was pianist, arranger and composer Mary Lou Williams who was creatively active from the 1920s to the seventies. Even the male jazz fraternity had to acknowledge her brilliance over a broad stylistic spectrum within the idiom. As the critic Barry Ulanov put it, in praising her work "one almost forgets that she's a woman". Condescending, yes, but one does have to allow for the fact that he wrote that in 1949. For my part, if I were attempting to compile a list of my all-time favourite ten jazz players irrespective of gender, Williams would certainly be a strong contender.

But there were excellent contemporaries such as the vibraphonist Marjorie Hyams, who recorded with Williams, and whose accomplishments included featuring in Woody Herman's First Herd. Years later, in a Stereo Review interview, she recalled: "In a sense, you weren't really looked upon as a musician, especially in clubs. There was more interest in what you were going to wear or how your hair was fixed – they just wanted you to look attractive, ultra feminine, largely because you were doing something they didn't consider feminine. Most of the time I fought it and didn't listen to them. Only in retrospect, when you start looking back and analyzing, you can see the obstacles that were put in front of you. I just thought at the time that I was too young to handle it, but now I see that it was really rampant chauvinism." Following her marriage, Hyams in 1950 quit jazz.

Seventy-five years later, the situation has improved immeasurably. While there remain

all-female jazz ensembles that are marketed as such, notably the DIVA Jazz Orchestra, that is not because women instrumentalists are still seen as 'novel'. I asked ex-DIVA pianist Roberta Piket, a contributor to Kosher Jammers and its predecessor, if she thought female instrumentalists were still handicapped by male prejudice. "Not male prejudice. Just a socialised, buddy mentality that excludes women by default. It's changing among younger male players because they grew up in a different environment than players my age. They are more comfortable having women friends and colleagues."

Which brings us to Tori Freestone, who besides tenor sax, her primary instrument, also plays violin, and she sings the lyrics on jazzified sea shanties, songs she grew up learning from her father who was a merchant seafarer. I was privileged to meet Tori and her dad at the launch, at the Vortex in London, of her album El Mar De Nubes, with her regular trio partners Dave Manington on bass and drummer Tim Giles. On its release in 2019, El Mar was proclaimed by critic John Fordham in the Guardian newspaper as his jazz album of the month.

Deservedly therefore, Tori has attained a level of respect that most jazzwomen of yesteryear could only have dreamed about. So, all's well? Perhaps not entirely, as I discovered when I sought out Tori's reflections on the gender issue in contemporary jazz. Strangely enough, she told me, it was something she'd recently been thinking about. A few situations, she said, had drawn her attention to the issue.

"It's interesting as I've usually avoided talking about this issue, feeling that just by getting on with my work, focusing on being a strong improviser, composer and instrumentalist is sufficient. I've always just wanted to be not seen as unusual just because there are traditionally less female instrumentalists in the jazz genre, and felt that by not drawing attention to it and being a strong musician will aid in changing the stereotypes. However, as time has gone on and changes are being made to raise awareness, including the decision by many festivals and promoters to engage a 50/50 rule in the UK, I feel it's time to comment.

I've been gigging since the age of seven. Firstly in folk clubs then working men's clubs with my dad, and then the National Youth Jazz Orchestra, through to studying jazz and becoming a professional jazz musician, composer and educator. I felt that my background playing at such a young age set me up to be tough to deal with, the fact I was performing and composing in a genre that was traditionally male dominated.

As a youngster my dad used to get me and my sister to have a game of snooker before setting up for the gig in some of the working men's clubs we played at as women weren't allowed in the snooker room. We were playing the gig so they couldn't stop us. This attitude was helpful as I progressed through NYJO, often being the only female or one of the only two females in the band in a misogynistic environment with a feeling of a lack of protection and nobody to go to regarding any issues.

At music college I experienced a lot of sexist comments from tutors but I brushed it off as I'd still get respect from them and my contemporaries for my playing. When I left college and tried to apply for funding for a project with a guitarist who was my partner at the time, we asked a well known musician who I'd had a lot of respect for to give us a reference. He left it until the last minute and then told my partner at the time that he couldn't give the band a reference as I was only in the band as I was 'his bird'. I didn't have the confidence to apply for funding again until my late 30s.

PHOTO BY DANIEL DEVLIN

I've had other experiences: for example, a male musician refusing to comp behind my solos or speak to me after I refused to go out with him. This went on for over three years in a well known professional big band: The list goes on but I've never complained about any of this – there's no line manager to complain to but also I felt it was just part and parcel of working in the genre so I shrugged it off.

Thankfully, most of her encounters with male musicians have been far more positive:

"I have had the utmost of respect from most of my colleagues, and especially those of my own generation, but also some from the older generation such as the wonderful trumpet player Henry Lowther and some of my saxophone heroes such as Stan Sulzmann and Pete Hurt who have been absolutely encouraging and who I see as mentors. I generally have tried to avoid the musicians with a bad attitude when possible and surround myself with great musicians I hugely respect who funnily enough also aren't misogynistic. Also, although I experienced sexism at the college I went to, Nikki Iles was teaching there and all the students including myself had the hugest respect for her. Having such a strong female role model at a time when this was rare at any of the colleges and when I myself was one of a handful of female students at a jazz college, was definitely an important factor at such a crucial stage.

I now play in Nikki's large orchestra and I've also been involved in jazz education myself, working at many of the major colleges and youth jazz summer schools, so hopefully I can also encourage the younger generation, some of those being females. It is a great sign that women are starting to be head of jazz courses here in the UK. Paula Gardiner started the jazz course at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama many years ago where I now teach and Dr

Jo Lawry has recently been appointed head of jazz at the Guildhall School of Music in London. In the States Ingrid Jensen is director of jazz at the Manhattan School of Music and Christine Jensen and the pianist Angelica Sanchez are associate professors at Eastman and Bard College to name a few, so things are definitely making progress in educational establishments. NYJO as an institution has worked hard to address their treatment of gender and diversity issues after a change of leadership many years ago. All this proves positive for the future.

After college, it took a long time to get noticed on the scene and for many years I just taught at local schools and organised plays. Eventually I broke into the scene. I'll never know if I was overlooked due to my gender or not, but it definitely took a lot longer than my male counterparts to start getting booked. I'm lucky to work with some great bands now including Nikki Iles, Huw Warren, the London Jazz Orchestra, the Julian Siegel Jazz Orchestra, Zoe Rahman and I've worked with the Jensen sisters, Hermeto Pascoal, Iain Ballamy, the Dankworth band with Cleo Laine, and alongside Angelica Sanchez to name just a few."

Besides her trio with Manington and Giles – El Mar de Nubes is their third album – Tori co-leads a duo with pianist Alcyona Mick; their latest release, Make One Little Room an Everywhere, was one of Jazzwise magazine's albums of the year. One of the compositions, says Tori, received an Ivor Novello Award for jazz ensemble writing.

"*The Ivor Novello Award was adjudicated blind and interestingly in the 10 years since they decided to do this, seven of the winners have been female, including Nikki Iles the year before my award. This is something precious to me, especially as in the run up to the award I had comments about being the only woman on the shortlist so therefore I was in with a chance.*

It's interesting thinking of the history of women in jazz and that so many women had to work in all female projects to get their voices heard. This is not the case working with Alcyona. We have a rapport and connection and that's all that it's about for us. It's interesting though that we're two females and two female bandleaders when we collaborate with others on our gigs. It feels really good to be doing this and breaking new ground in the sense that we're not doing this to make a point. Hopefully that shows a change from the previous generations who had to do all female projects through necessity or felt they needed to make a point. I love that it's through choice. I can only have the kind of rapport I have in a duo setting with Alcyona and that's because of her musicianship not her gender.

This brings me to elaborate on why I feel now is an important time to comment on the issue of gender in jazz.

As I mentioned, I always felt I had power to convey – there's no issue by being a strong musician with my own voice. I always felt this was the way forward. Working against any sexist comments, misogynistic behaviour or subtle prejudices was almost an incentive and an aid to give me an extra motivation on top of my main motivation which is my love for music.

However, I have felt some of the more recent movements to redress the balance have actually disempowered me and some of my female colleagues. The duo have had comments directed at us such as, 'It's OK for you, you're both women so you'll get loads of gigs,' and the topic coming up in regular discussions. After a lifetime working to redress the balance in a subtle way this really isn't helpful. I'm still having to work just as hard to get tours and funding and often the gigs and tours I've got have been

at smaller venues with less pay than the male colleagues who've made these sorts of comments.

Maybe it's benefitting the younger generation more and we'll see the effects in due course. I hope so. I've also had musicians who don't know me at all and have never played with me asking if I can be put down as a 'confirmed partner' on funding applications. These are people who never showed an interest in working with me up until now. I understand why promoters, festivals and funding bodies are trying to redress the balance in this way and I think it's important, but while the pendulum is swinging, some male colleagues who've been very comfortable with the status quo are not happy. It feels unpleasant at the moment and saddens me as I've always felt that despite the odd bad experience like those that I mentioned, the jazz scene is generally a lovely community and we're all in it to create good music and continue to pass on a very special tradition. I must again reiterate that thankfully this is not the majority, but the sentiment is there sadly."

I hope the changes that are being imposed make some difference and that the increase in female role models helps the next generations to veer away from seeing this as a male dominated art form and thus create a more even spread. I think this will take a while and I really hope that in the meantime my male counterparts who've benefited from not having to experience what myself and other female musicians have experienced, can openly accept and encourage a more even playing field which I'm sure would influence the music and the art form in a hugely positive way. I look at how female musicians in the younger generation are having so many more opportunities and having their voices heard. I must note that some of this is due to the changes in attitudes of promoters and festivals and their rule changes, and I also see them being able to speak out when they feel there are injustices at an educational level so this is already a big change. I really feel the bad treatment and lack of a protective environment I experienced at college would be called out now. I hope this can carry on for the younger generation into the workplace."

None of the jazz chauvinism Tori has endured has deterred her.

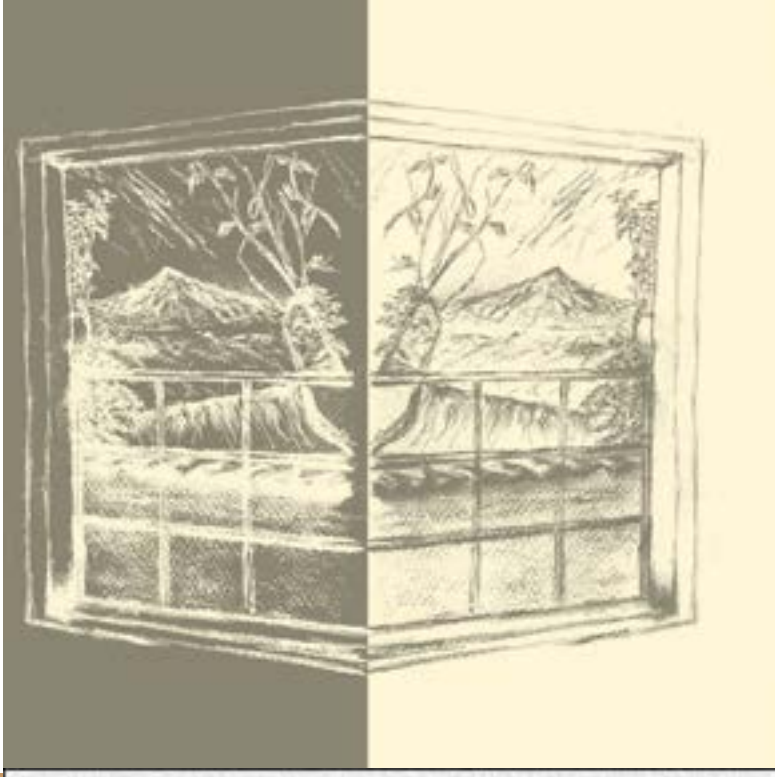
I love my life working as a jazz musician and composer and the challenges and struggles have served to make me the musician I am today. My hope really is that the swinging pendulum eventually gets to a point that finds gender in jazz not needing to be spoken or written or thought about anymore. For a female musician not to be immediately asked if they're a vocalist on turning up to a gig would a good starting point."

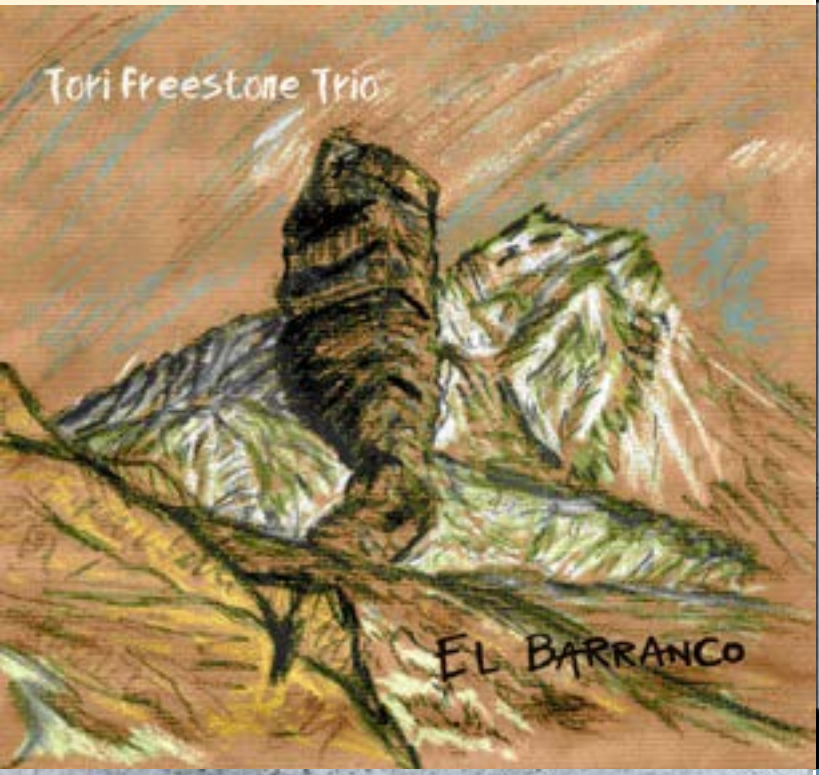
TORI LINKS CLICK HERE

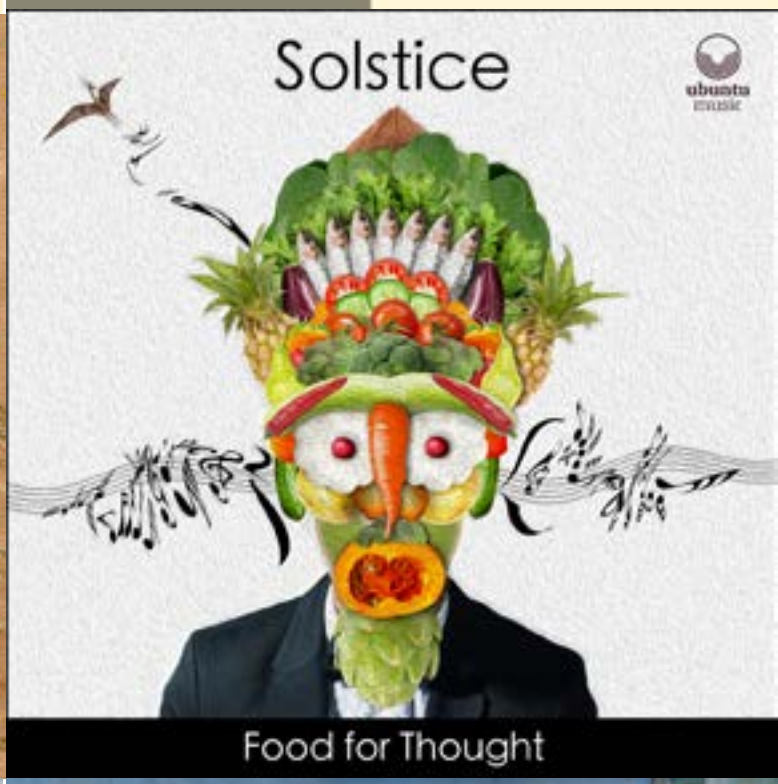
CLICK ON THE ALBUM COVERS TO PURCHASE

CLICK HERE TO PURCHASE: Mike Gerber, Kosher Jammers: Jewish connections in jazz Volume 1 – the USA


MAKE ONE LITTLE ROOM
AN EVERYWHERE
TORI
FREESTONE
ALCYONA
MICK




Tori Freestone Trio
EL BARRANCO


Solstice
ubuntu
Food for Thought


SOLSTICE
ALIMENTATION


Tori
freestone
Trio
IN THE
CHOP
HOUSE

EYITEMI

PHOTO BY JAMES CLIFFORD KENT

PHOTO BY JAMES CLIFFORD KENT

EYITEMI: FIGHTER

Behind the scenes we all have our struggles. Some of us work to find different strategies to cope with these struggles (I hope) and sometimes those strategies work, sometimes they do not. I regularly speak to women across the world about their feelings of isolation, lack of support and perceived lack of value. There are common themes, but one thing that is very clear is that when we share our experiences, we often no longer feel alone. We realise that many people are feeling the same way and going through the same experiences, even though we may have arrived along a different path. For some, art is their tool. And by sharing experiences through artistry, it can in turn inspire others to speak their truth, and know that they are not alone; know they are heard and valued. Art has always had the power to speak the truth, to inspire and to empower. EyiTemi's recent single Fighter, does exactly this.

Released in July of this year, Fighter speaks to triumph over trauma and resilience. The lyrics are raw and EyiTemi lays herself bare for us to not only share in her experience, but relate to our own experiences. Her mantra "Every day is day one. I want people to know they can always start again."

EyiTemi had what she describes an 'interesting' childhood. Born in the UK, she was sent to Nigeria without her mother and later lived with her father and five siblings and felt she was in an environment where she did not belong. These feelings have shaped her throughout her life and speak to the strength and resilience you find in her artistry.

It took such a toll on me, and I didn't realise for a long time that the personality I had was very much based on this – thank God for therapy! Therapy and those light bulb moments when we understand more about psychology and whatever happens to a child between zero to five years is actually core to the adults they become. I went through a lot and just felt like I didn't belong anywhere. Not because people made me feel that way, I just didn't feel that intrinsically. So, I've gone through life feeling like I've never quite fitted in and that I needed to act a certain way to belong to the place I found myself. There were things I felt, but I couldn't quite figure out why I was the way I was. The moment that inspired fighter, was when my cousin showed me a picture of myself when I was probably five years old. I saw that picture and emotions that I didn't know existed literally came up in me and it was very overwhelming.

There was so much trauma that I didn't realise I had. But rather than make me feel sad, I felt such power. I felt like I had survived a lot and that's the absolute heart of Fighter. Surviving the traumas according to what's happened in your life and not being subdued by that. Understanding that there is so much of a journey that you've made and if you must look back and take stock, or you'll miss that. You're so used to the fight, you're still in your fighter mode, you forget that you've already won. So I think that is where I found confidence and empowerment. It came from that realisation that I have survived a lot and I feel confident going into the future because I understand the journey. I'm not scared anymore because I know that I have within me the resilience. It doesn't mean everything will be easy, it just means that I know that I have within me the resilience to

move forward.

EyiTemi only recently started her journey into the singer songwriter world in 2020, but she is not wasting any time, releasing Taking Flight (2022) LIVE @ London Jazz Festival(2023) Kaleidoscope and Vision Blurred (2024) and now Fighter this year. So you could consider EyiTemi an emerging artist, despite her years of experience, singing through her life and including working as a judge in the innovation category of BBC Jazz Awards.

I think that people in the music industry associate youth with beginning something – youth and expectations. This is when you do this and these are the structures you have in place. And for me, it's really important for my music for people to understand my journey and for people to understand that it is possible to start and shake things up a bit. Whether it's ourselves or society or other people saying it is too late. I am a firm believer that you can start whenever you want to start. This is core to my story. I didn't plan any of this.

"Every day is day one. I want people to know they can always start again."

What is also very core is, sometimes, I know for me personally anyway, when you see a journey that you feel is unbelievable, you can actually do it . I always think don't think about Mount Everest, just take one step at a time because every step you take brings you forward. And so for me that one step, every day, is to just be kind to yourself - if you messed up yesterday, you start again. I have to remind myself of this. Start again tomorrow. Because if you don't, you're dragged down so much by the past you're not able to actually see forward. So for me, I think absolutely, day one every day, it gives me the chance to try again.

Whereas the COVID lockdown period had many negative elements, it was, for some, a great time of creativity and it was in fact during this time, that EyiTemi started to develop the idea that she could be a songwriter.

I started writing in 2020. I didn't have ambitions of being a singer songwriter, in fact, songwriting was not something I thought I could do. I knew I could sing, but compared to your Whitney Houstons, I thought I was pretty average, so I didn't think about myself in any way special. So the idea of a career in music was ridiculous. I just love singing. I was and I still am obsessed with music.

It started with me taking a walk during lockdown and coming back and literally a song just started in my head. I was a little bit scared about it thinking what do I do with this song? With lockdown, I had time, so I literally took a pen and started to write. I knew I wanted to write about my experience of my divorce as I had a really traumatic end to the relationship and so I knew I wanted to write about the pain I felt and the hope. I couldn't play anything so I literally was writing and the music was in my head so I took my phone and hummed the music. I didn't know how to translate my head to the paper. It was literally that ordinary. But after a while I thought I don't know how to play any instrument, I have no pallet from which to choose what to do. So when they opened up the restrictions, I started with a piano teacher just down the road. And I said, I don't want to play music, I just want to know how to find the chords and know what they're called. And that's how I started writing. I have an instinct for music and sounds that I don't even understand. I also get songs in my dreams. I sleep and in my dream I know I'm singing a brand new song. I wake up and I'm frantically looking for my phone so I can record myself.

After attending a music event in Wales, the


PHOTO BY SHARON STEENBERGEN

wonderful Welsh community introduced and recommended musicians to EyiTemi and it wasn't long after this that she performed her first ever gig in Wales. Not long after this, she started working with some incredible musicians to help shape and realise her songs, eventually including Femi Temowo on Fighter.

I used to run events and I knew many established musicians - Soweto Kinch played at my wedding and Femi Temowo I knew from 20 years ago. But Wales was the starting point and then I started tapping into my London community. They bought into it very quickly. I was a novice, what did I know? They were really very patient with me because I don't write music in the normal way. It's all about finding the right chemistry, not just what works well together, but the heart of it. I know that sounds sentimental but I'm a very vulnerable person on stage.

I've been incredibly lucky and now I'm like a puppy. I'm very excited about what I do and I think possibly the wonder that I still have, is maybe attractive to my musicians too.

You can see experience the wonder and chemistry yourself in this live performance video Colne Road Studios in July 2025

At the start of my conversation with EyiTemi, and the exploration of her journey, she told me that she felt she didn't belong. So for my final question, I asked her if she felt that she did now belong.

So glad you asked the question because I was thinking about all of this. Music I feel saved me. The only time that I felt I belonged was from the moment I started music. All throughout my life, I never felt I really belonged. I don't look like my mum. I'm a bit awkward and I was always 'that friend'. I just did things that felt different to other people but when I started doing music... suddenly it made sense.

And not only did music make me feel like I finally found myself and my place, I found me.

EYiTEMI LINKS CLICK HERE

Text by Fiona Ross

DR. JASNA JOVIĆEVI

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PHOTO BY NIKOLA LUCIC

RESTORING WOMEN TO THE JAZZ CANON

BY DR. JASNA JOVIĆEVIĆ

The history of jazz has often been explained through a narrative centered on individual male virtuosos who define entire stylistic periods. This pattern appears natural in many historical accounts, yet it reflects a selective process shaped by cultural assumptions about who constitutes the subject of history. Women have always participated in jazz, but the narrative structure that produced the jazz canon positioned them outside the core story. To understand how this exclusion happened, it is necessary to examine how the canon was constructed and to recognize the historical evidence that contradicts the dominant narrative.

The idea of artistic genius, central to jazz historiography, has roots in Western philosophical traditions in which creativity and originality were associated with masculine identity. Nineteenth century discourse on virtuosity and genius linked intellectual and creative potential to male subjects, while women were perceived as capable but not inventive at the highest artistic level (Cveji, 2016; Battersby, 1989). When early jazz scholarship began defining the music, these older ideas shaped the interpretation of improvisation and musical innovation. Louis Armstrong became the ideal example. In Collier's (1978) account, Armstrong was presented as the first genius of jazz, a figure whose personal innovation transformed the music and initiated a historical lineage of great men. This model then guided the construction of the canon, which privileged figures such as Parker, Coltrane, Davis and Monk while overlooking contributions that did not align with the expectations associated with genius.

Angela Y. Davis explains that women "have always been inside jazz," yet institutional and cultural frameworks consistently placed them outside the recognized narrative (Carrington, Wood and McMullen, 2023). The canon valued particular forms of musicianship, especially soloistic instrumental performance in public venues controlled by men. Other forms of work, including ensemble leadership, arranging, community-based performance and teaching, were viewed as peripheral. These forms of participation, however, were central to many women's musical lives. The result was an historical narrative that did not reflect reality but rather reproduced gendered assumptions about whose work was worthy of preservation.

Historical evidence shows that women were present in every stage of jazz history. During the early years of the music in New Orleans, women played instruments, led bands and worked in a wide range of venues such as family ensembles, churches, vaudeville circuits, neighborhood halls and clubs. When Storyville closed in 1917 and musicians relocated to northern cities, women moved alongside them. Lil Hardin, Lovie Austin, Hallie Anderson, Mattie Gilmore and Marie Lucas were active participants in the musical migration that shaped the Chicago scene. They led groups, performed regularly and contributed to the development of early jazz. Their absence

from canonical accounts reflects the selective lens of historians rather than their actual influence.
The selective narrative becomes particularly evident during the swing era. The 1930s and 1940s saw the rise of an extraordinary number of all women big bands. Archival research shows that approximately two hundred such ensembles performed across the United States during the war years, many of them touring nationally and some internationally, including in Europe. Their professionalism, musical discipline and popularity were remarkable. They played in dance halls, jazz clubs, theaters and on radio broadcasts. Audiences welcomed them, and many musicians built long careers through this network of orchestras.

Research documents the names of numerous ensembles;The Blue Belles, The Parisian Redheads, Lil Hardin's All-Girl Band, The Ingenues, The International Sweethearts of Rhythm, Phil Spitalny's Musical Sweethearts, Helen Lewis and Her All-Girl Jazz Syncopators, The Schuster Sisters, The Milady Saxo Four, The Darling Saxophone Four, Edna Croudson's Rhythm Girls, Phil Spitalny's Hour of Charm Orchestra, Al D'Artega's All-Girl Band, Count Berni Vici's All-Girl Theater Band, The Prairie View Coeds, Virgil Whyte's Musical Sweethearts, Herb Cook's Swinghearts, Eddie Durham's All-Star Orchestra, Gloria Gaye and Her Glamour Girls Band and The Darlings of Rhythm were among the many groups shaping wartime musical life. Despite their visibility, later histories dismissed these ensembles as temporary war substitutes, implying that their artistry existed only because male musicians were drafted. This framing trivialized their work and reduced their cultural significance. When the canon solidified in the postwar era, these orchestras were excluded and remembered only as curiosities rather than as central contributors to swing culture and jazz history.

The bebop era provides another example of exclusion. Canonical accounts focus almost exclusively on Parker, Gillespie, Monk and their male collaborators. Yet the new history interpretation identifies many women who shaped bebop's musical ideas and performance practices. Mary Lou Williams stands as one of the most important composers and arrangers of the period. Her harmonic innovations influenced leading male musicians, and her mentorship extended across generations. Norma Carson, Clora Bryant, Elvira 'Vi' Redd, Melba Liston, Hazel Scott, Beryl Booker and Marjorie Hyams contributed significantly to the development of bebop as horn players, trombonists, pianists and arrangers. Their participation challenges the assumption that bebop was a field dominated entirely by men. Their absence from canonical histories reflects a lack of recognition, not a lack of impact.

As a saxophonist, I have experienced the consequences of this historical narrative. In educational settings, the repertoire selected for study overwhelmingly highlights the work of male musicians. The solos considered essential for transcription, the artists promoted as models of excellence and the recordings presented as foundational shape expectations about who belongs in jazz. Women entering improvisational spaces must navigate an identity that has not been prepared for them by the historical narrative. Research shows that musical identities in improvisation are negotiated through interaction (Wilson and MacDonald, 2012). For women, this negotiation is shaped by a legacy that imagined jazz as a masculine domain (Annfelt, 2003).

Reconstructing jazz historiography requires acknowledging that the canon is a cultural construction rather than a natural reflection of artistic importance. The canon emerged in contexts where women had limited access to institutional power, public

venues and formal recognition. As a result, the historical record reflects structural inequalities rather than the true diversity of artistic contributions.

One of the most persistent obstacles in rewriting the narrative is the trope of the exceptional woman. Histories often highlight one or two prominent women, presenting them as rare anomalies. This creates the false impression that women appeared sporadically rather than continuously across decades. Bassnett (1998) argues that isolating women in this way prevents recognition of collective presence and historical continuity. Instead, historiography must emphasize the networks and communities through which women contributed. Oral history and archival research, such as Tucker's work on women in New Orleans jazz, demonstrate the range of roles women occupied, from soloists and bandleaders to teachers, arrangers and club owners (Tucker, 2004). These materials show not only participation but leadership, organization and community building.

Another dimension of this reconstruction involves recognizing how free jazz and free improvisation created alternative spaces for musical identities. Although these movements also featured prominent male figures, their structural principles offered opportunities for musicians who did not fit traditional jazz expectations. Open forms, collective interaction and less hierarchical performance settings allowed women to articulate creative voices on their own terms (Wilmer, 1987; Oliveros, 2006). Many women gravitated to these scenes because they provided alternatives to the performance norms associated with the canon.

Transforming the canon requires institutional change. Curricula must include women not as special additions, but as essential contributors. Jazz festivals, media platforms and recording institutions must represent women's work as central. Researchers must approach archives with attention to silence and absence, asking why certain figures were overlooked and how these omissions can be corrected. Most importantly, the goal should not be to add a few women into an unchanged structure. It should be to build a new narrative that accurately reflects the collective and diverse reality of jazz.

Women have always been part of jazz. Their exclusion from the canon is a consequence of selective historiography, not musical truth, and restoring their presence is an act of historical accuracy rather than revision. A young woman learning jazz today should see herself reflected in the tradition and should encounter evidence that women played, composed, organized, arranged and led throughout jazz history. When the canon reflects these contributions, it becomes more complete, more representative and more capable of sustaining new generations of musicians who understand jazz as a field shaped by many people rather than a narrow lineage defined by a few. As a saxophonist working within this tradition, I know how urgently the jazz industry must involve women instrumentalists as full participants. This requires more than correcting the past; it demands opening space in education, programming and leadership so that women are present where decisions are made and where music is shaped. When women are supported as creators instead of treated as exceptions, the field becomes both truer to its history and more imaginative in its future. Jazz has always contained women, and its next chapter depends on finally recognizing their place at the center of the music.

DR. JASNA JOVIĆEVIĆ

In addition to her performance career, Jovićević is a dedicated educator with extensive experience in pedagogy at the university level and in non-formal education. She combines her musical expertise with knowledge from yoga, nature, psychology, and ecology to encourage creativity and personal experience in music and art. She founded the New Spark Jazz Orchestra-Balkan Women in Jazz, an all-female big band that marks a significant milestone in Southern Eastern European jazz history.

Jovićević's artistic and scientific research projects are numerous and varied. They include "Artivism for Safe Spaces: Empowering New Educational Models to Address GBV in South African Higher Education," "Positioning of Female Instrumentalists in Social Practices of Jazz," "FLIM – Female Leadership in Music," "Doing Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Preparing for Improvisation," "Soundscape of Female Experience," "Sounding Solitude," "I Sit and Worry About Her," "Flow Vertical," "Walking on Margins", and "Sound of Birds." These projects explore themes ranging from gender identity and jazz performance to the impact of sound vibrations and the integration of music and ecological advocacy, as well as social justice.

Her commitment to innovative pedagogical approaches is evident in her roles at various educational institutions. She is serving as a Visiting Research Associate at Tshwane University of Technology – Faculty of Arts & Design in Pretoria, South Africa, and as a Professor of Vocational Studies at the College of Vocational Studies for the Education of Preschool Teachers in Subotica. She has also been a Guest Lecturer at JAM Music Lab Private University in Vienna and the Faculty of Music University of Arts in Belgrade, among others.

Her published scientific articles cover a range of topics, including the sonification of brainwaves, the mapping of performative bodies in jazz improvisation, and gender perspectives of instrumental jazz performers. Her work has been featured in esteemed publications such as Leonardo Music Journal, Journal of Art and Media Studies, and the Routledge Companion on Jazz and Gender.

FOR JASNA'S LINKS CLICK HERE

The Scholar's Swing: Nomfundo Xaluva on Craft, Curriculum, and Channeling the Legacy of South African Jazz Legends

BY SHIREEN FISHER

Rooted deeply in the soil of South Africa, Nomfundo Xaluva represents the new vanguard of African jazz. She has successfully worked her way through the worlds of demanding professional performance and rigorous academic study, culminating in her pivotal role shaping the next generation of musical thinkers at the University of Cape Town.

Nomfundo Xaluva is more than a voice; she is a meticulously crafted blend of artistry, academia, and heritage. A jazz vocalist whose sound is deeply rooted in the soil of South Africa, Xaluva has successfully navigated the worlds of classical training, demanding professional performance, and rigorous business and academic study. Her journey is a testament to the power of deliberate, multi-faceted engagement with one's craft, culminating in her current role as a Senior Lecturer of Jazz Studies at the University of Cape Town's (UCT) South African College of Music (SACM).

Xaluva's musical life began not with a formal decree, but a moment of sheer fascination. Growing up in Port Elizabeth (Gqeberha), she remembers visiting a friend's home. "Around 2 years before going to boarding school, I had gone to visit a school friend for a weekend," she recalls. "There was a piano - an upright, a black upright piano. I'd always seen pianos on television. My grandfather was an avid lover of jazz, was a jazz record collector, so I'd kind of seen pianos on TV and that kind of thing. There wasn't, I don't think there was one at my primary school, Galvin Park at the time, so when I got to my friend's house and I saw an upright piano for the first time in person, I was completely enamored with this instrument. I sat at it and she taught me how to play. My grandfather was like, 'okay, you can actually start taking piano lessons when you go to a school that offers them.' And when I got to Grahamstown, to Victoria Girls Primary in 1995, then a Model C school, a white school, that's what we used to call it back in the day. That's when I started classical piano lessons, the year after I enrolled there. So I enrolled in 1995. I started piano in 1996. I was 12. So I started classical piano when I was 12 and I've been a student of music from then on right up until now."

For Nomfundo, the singing bug bit more through singing in school choirs while at primary and high school. She'd be given a solo here and there, and be asked to lead the song at Eisteddfods. "I must have been in grade 10 when I started to study classical voice formally through Trinity. And then I became the school choir captain and I was still playing piano and studying. After school, I came to the South African College of Music at UCT to do a BMus and then their Masters and now I'm doing my PhD, and so for as long as I can remember I've always been a scholar of music."

When it comes to her sound, Nomfundo says it's not something she premeditates,

PHOTO BY ZUKISWA MINYI

PHOTO BY ZUKISWA MINYI

having studied so many different singers and albums and listened to so much music as a student of jazz. *“Being exposed not only to American jazz, but also to South African jazz, I listened to a lot of Miriam Makeba, who was the subject of my masters and continues to be the subject of my research going into PhD. And I listened to a lot of Sibongile Khumalo as well - Live at the Market Theatre, that seminal album from which I learned Yakhal' Inkomo. So I think I've infused so many different sounds - whether it's Diane Reeves or Carmen McRae or Miriam - the way that my music sounds now is a combination of all my influences. What makes it more unique is the fact that it's blended with my unique voice and my own lived experience. And my training on my instrument. That's why you'll hear a bit of swing. I was classically trained. Here and there, you'll hear the classical elements in my voice. It's a lovely kind of hybrid of all the influences that I've gathered over the years and the different styles. But I don't sit and premeditate that now I'm going to write a song that pays. That's going to be this, this. Yeah, my music doesn't come to me like that.”*

Launching a music career after years spent in academic study can be a daunting transition. The process of bridging the gap between university and releasing her debut album is something she describes as both challenging and serendipitous. *“As a gift for graduating with my masters, my family gave me some money towards recording something, an album of sorts. It was very little money when I think about how much it costs to record an album now. But it was never supposed to be a big album or anything like that. And so I gathered some friends of mine. We were studying together, people like Bokani Dyer, Wesley Rustin and Kevin Gibson. I mean, they were not students, but I'd been playing with them in the scene. Buddy Wells, Mandisi Dyantyis, who is now my husband - we had all studied together and we played together all this time. So I thought, let me get friends and colleagues and people I've worked with into the studio and record the songs that I'd accumulated. It was supposed to be an independent project. I got the late Dave Subkleve to engineer, went to the SABC studios and we recorded. It was only once the project was finished that Universal Music licensed it and then bought it and took it to the next level of distribution and packaging and licensing and marketing and all of that. So,my first album was supposed to be just a little quiet project..”*

The successful launch of her first album, Kusile - a project licensed and distributed by Universal Music that went on to win a Metro FM Music Award - might suggest an immediate transformation of her professional life. However, Nomfundo found that her success in the academic world hadn't quite prepared her for the realities of the music business:

“I was quite disillusioned, I think, after varsity because the music school at the time didn't really prime us for what the professional world would look like. And so my thing was that, okay, I've graduated with my masters now, so I'm in the world of work, I'm going to have gigs and I'm going to do all this and, like, you know, have albums and go to awards and it's just not really that. And then the actual hustle of being a musician kicked in, you know. So it was great because the profile was growing when I won. When the first album won the Metro FM Music Award, it was like a really good kind of springboard. And when I opened for Diane Reeves at Monte Casino. I started to build on that, but it wasn't a massive change. It wasn't an overnight success. It was relatively ordinary apart from, of course, doing gigs, pushing the album and just being a typical musician trying to, you know, get from gig to gig.”

Nomfundo started lecturing at SACM on a part-time basis in 2018 while doing her

MBA and continuing regular gigs. In 2021, she moved into a permanent lecturer role and is currently a senior lecturer in Jazz Studies. Discussing the state of music education in the country, particularly within the jazz sector, she offers a nuanced perspective. She acknowledges a significant and growing enthusiasm for the genre across demographics, noting that jazz is increasingly appealing to younger audiences and is shedding its image as music reserved only for the elite. However, she quickly points out that this demand isn't matched by equitable access, particularly in underserved communities.

"There's definitely a demand, a really good demand for jazz education in South Africa. And by that, I mean also just a demand across demographics, right? Meaning that it's not only old people who listen to the music or a certain, you know, ethnic group or it's like, or a certain kind of...class. There's a demand for it because I think it's coming into the mainstream in a really good way. That it's hip to young people as well now to be at jazz festivals and to play jazz and to go to jazz events because jazz is evolving and it's no longer a music for the elite or a music for, you know, the old Stokvel jazz collector societies. It's really lovely, but still it's not reaching all the corners that I think it should reach. I would definitely love to see more music education in township schools. And by that, I don't just mean choirs. I'm talking about instrument instruction. And I know that's a difficult thing because, you've got to balance that with how you store these instruments and these assets individually in such a crime-ridden society, right? Because you also don't want to make schools targets of criminality when you've got pianos and saxophones and all this kind of thing. So that's a difficult one because I think it leaves the majority of the black child out of the music education system. But other than that, I think it's good. It's lovely to see school jazz bands and school ensembles. I'm fortunate because I've been adjudicating the Waterfront High School Band Slam that Gavin Minter runs. It's great. And to see kids from different areas, whether it's Pinelands or Elsie's River or Belhar come with the band, a big band. I love that. But like I said, we work towards trying to get that into as many schools as possible."

Nomfundo sees her multifaceted role at the university as critical for repositioning South African jazz within both the academic curriculum and the global context. Her responsibilities extend beyond teaching performance, focusing on representation, documentation, and fostering critical thought in her students. She highlights two key aspects of her academic influence: the power of presence and the imperative to re-center the narrative. *"Firstly, I think my role as a black woman teaching jazz at UCT Music School isn't in itself a significant sort of thing. But I think when I was studying, there certainly wasn't anyone who looked like me teaching jazz. And so the representation element matters, but I also try not to be burdened by it."*

In terms of intellectual repositioning, her focus is on broadening the scope of study, she knows that it can still be a music rooted in practice, but also still have a theoretical depth. *"We're not trying to create replicas of each other. We're trying to create people who are great artists, but also are not just good on stage, but they actually can think critically and they can engage with the world and global politics and engage with art in different ways. Because I also think there's that risk that someone can be a great singer, but then can't have a conversation with you about anything else."*

This ambition for her students - to be both powerful performers and profound

thinkers - directly relates to her choice of research focus. When asked if this was why she centered her work on Miriam Makeba, Xaluva affirms, *"Absolutely. I think, yes, because she was eloquent, but she was also a great performer. But she was smart and she was bold and she was daring and she could speak and she was invested in the world around her, right? And I think, and she was able to engage discussions about her identity, about, you know, geopolitics in a way that was, that people could hear. And so I think for students as well, it's that thing of like, you don't want to just be talented, but you also want to be able to think, you want to grow your brain, not just how well you play an instrument."*

Recognising the stark difference between artistic talent and commercial viability, Xaluva pursued a Master of Business Administration (MBA) to bridge the gap between her passion and professional sustainability. When asked about her decision to study business alongside her music, she elaborates on how this education transformed her understanding of the creative economy.

"I did my MBA at the Henley Business School, which is part of the University of Reading, which is in the UK, but they've got an Africa campus in Joburg. I enrolled for an MBA in 2018 and graduated in 2022. And when I say, you know, it's really about how artists and creative entrepreneurs can empower themselves to understand how, not just how the industry of their discipline works, but how the business of it works, right? And through the MBA, I discovered that there's a massive difference between the music industry and the music business.

And so, and it's still a work in progress in terms of learning, but for me, I'm teaching a lot of those fundamentals from business school now, bringing it into the music curriculum. In the digital age in which live

now, you know, it's good for me to have the business education to teach even at an elementary level. How do we create art in a way that's sustainable when there's no music and look and listen and all the music shops used to buy CDs from, right? How do we, you know, when we're not buying CDs now? We don't. I think the fact that I've got the MBA and I did all that research and all those assignments as part of the modules in the MBA has put me in a good position to be able to engage with students. I'm not a business person. I'm still an artist at heart, although I have an MBA. But at least I'm able to engage with the commercial elements and aspects of my work as an artist. Also knowing what to look at in terms of marketing. Absolutely. But just understanding how the money flows. I think it's important."

In the highly competitive world of professional music, the path to success is rarely just about raw skill. It requires deep, continuous investment in one's craft and a solid understanding of the music business itself. Nomfundo explains that to achieve the kind of success where promoters don't just ask for a singer but specifically demand a specific one, an artist must transform natural talent into a high-level, unique skill through dedicated learning.

"I always think if someone wants to be a musician, if you can, you should study music. And you don't necessarily have to study it through a university. There's so many other ways of being a music student. People want to but I also understand that not everybody can. In an ideal world, everybody would. But there's issues of capacity, of funding, etc. Some people just don't like the university space. And that's fine. You know, there's so many other little colleges or organisations. There are other ways, identifying a mentor or someone or instructor who's going to help you craft and practice, someone who keeps you accountable for your own progress and your own skills development in the craft. Because I think sometimes when I say you must study, people immediately think, you're basically saying everyone who wants to be a good musician must go to university. I don't think that this is true, but you have to study it in one way or the other because I think it's about longevity, like the talent. A lot of people are talented but are you able to transfer that into a skill where it's a unique, high level skill that like people go, yeah, we want a singer for, it's a difference between someone going, 'You know, we need someone, a singer for this event or singer for this thing,' and throw some singers around or someone going, "No, no, no, we don't want a singer for that. We want Nomfundo!"

Nomfundo's stage presence can be summed up in three words: intimate, academic, and deeply personal. Her performances involve the seamless flow of stories - about her late grandmother, family grief, and the subsequent tribute through song which makes it feel less like a show and more like a privileged evening in a private lounge. She aims for a connection that bypasses the need for elaborate performance. She views the stage as a direct channel for connection and teaching, a place where she can be real without the pressure of "perfection."

"I don't try to be anything other than that. People come to the shows knowing that I'm an academic. So they always tease, saying, 'Okay, we're about to get schooled now!' Because I like to teach as I sing because it's one and the same thing. I've been doing it for a long time now, so I'm comfortable enough on the stage to not be perfect. I think authenticity and the comfort of not being obsessed with perfection is very good. I don't do the theatrics."

She reveals the powerful, personal influence of the late legend, Sibongile Khumalo, describing their extremely close relationship and the lessons learned from her mentor's

PHOTO BY LERATO PAKADE

as: effortless greatness.

“We were very close. We served on the SAMRO Foundation board together. She was very good friends with my mother. In fact, I called her mother. When I look at her career and I look at kind of her influence on me and I just think she never tried too hard, you know, and yet she was just the best, but she wasn't all over the stage, she wasn't loud. She was just here, she was like, ‘I'm good, I'm an excellent artist, I'm an excellent vocalist and vocal artist, I can tell stories through songs, I'm a craftsman in my instrument, and when you come to see me, that's what you're going to get.’ And that's it. She didn't take herself seriously at all. She had a wicked sense of humour. Didn't take things too seriously. Laughed a lot. We drank a lot of wine. But she was excellent. And so I just think I don't have to do all the other stuff if I'm just really, if I work at being good at what I do."

Nomfundo details the progression of her discography, with each album marking a distinct period of growth and reflection in her life and career. The second album, From.Now.On, was released under Universal and served as both a celebration and recognition of her cultural influences and the rich South African jazz tradition. The album's central ethos was built around a tripartite structure: "From," paying homage to foundational figures like Miriam Makeba and acknowledging her roots in Queenstown (Eastern Cape); "Now," featuring her own compositions reflecting her current life; and "On," exploring how to carry this rich musical legacy forward. The album featured a deliberate structure to reinforce this theme and was recorded at Milestone Studios, with collaboration from Mark Fransman. It opened with the track "Spirit," featuring the late Jessica Mbangeni performing powerful praise poetry that invoked the spirit of Nomfundo's ancestors and key influences like Winston Mankunku Ngozi. This effort was well-received, earning her a second Metro FM Music Award.

The third album, Ndilapha (which means "I'm here"), marked her transition to an independent project after her time with Universal concluded. Released in 2024, the album serves as a deep, personal narrative chronicling her life and evolution between 2015 and its release. It signals her significant growth not only as a musician but as a woman, encompassing major life roles and experiences such as coming into motherhood, navigating life as a professional woman, a wife, a mom, and a practitioner, while also documenting personal losses suffered during that period. The title Ndilapha is a commentary on how she chooses to show up in the world, asserting a self-defined presence and declaring that just because she might not be presenting in the way that listeners expect, it doesn't diminish her power or her right to be present.

Having achieved a position where she can be selective about her engagements, Nomfundo emphasised that her goals are now driven by quality and alignment with her artistic identity, rather than mere quantity of work. Her stage appearances must speak directly to who she is and what she does.

The most critical focus for the years ahead, however, is her PhD, which she began this year. This academic undertaking is central to her creative output, as it is designed to amalgamate her work as an academic and a creative. The integrated PhD centers on creativity, performance, and songwriting as the primary spaces of inquiry, and it is highly likely that her next recording project will be an output of this research. Nomfundo looks forward to presenting this work in the next two years, showcasing how art and performance contribute to new knowledge.

Beyond her research, Nomfundo is

dedicated to advancing her academic career, aiming to grow her profile within the university space. She is focused on ascending to the ranks of Associate Professor and eventually full Professor, while also committing to becoming a better educator.

On a personal level, her primary goal remains to be a good mother to her daughter, Zizi, and taking the rest of her journey as it comes.

NOMFUNDO LINKS CLICK HERE

CLICK ON THE ALBUM COVERS TO PURCHASE

BEHIND THE LENS

THE PHOTOGRAPHERS

ENID FARBER

The title of the concert was Women in Jazz. Despite the difficulty for me getting to The Danny Kaye Theater in New York City that night, I could not, NOT go, simply because of said title! Four jazz singers sang the music of four legends, Ella Fitzgerald, Nina Simone, Lena Horne and Billie Holiday. It was very fulfilling to me to be photographing four women I had not had the chance to before and a source of pride that I had photographed three of the four legends (all but Billie) near the end of their careers and the beginning of mine.

Left to right, Madeline Peyroux, Hilary Kole, Maya Days and Lilli Cooper

My friend and colleague Kath Oliger, produces a series of performances on the banks of the Hudson River, not IN Manhattan, but across the river on the New Jersey side with a view unrivaled in any music happening within the Garden State. On alternate Thursdays in the months of July, August and September, she presents three different groups in three strategic spots spanning the complex of Port Imperial, Weehawken,NJ, offering three distinct views of the skyline. This past summer three of my favorite musicians, who all happen to reside in New Jersey, and might not yet be household names, but are highly respected and make their way in this world of jazz exclusively, were on Kath's roster.

Leonieke Scheuble, pianist.

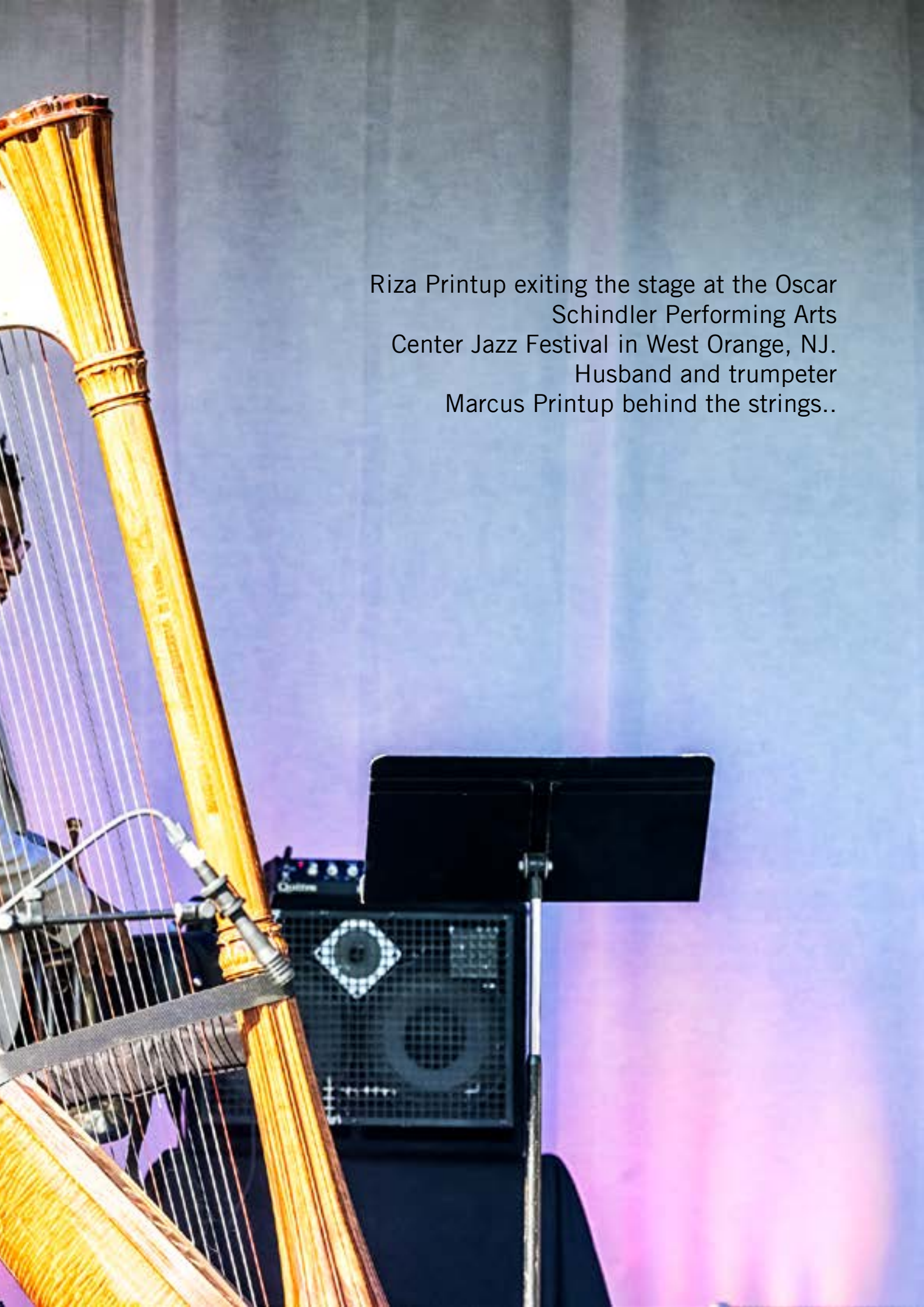
Roberta Piket, pianist


Kate Baker,singer

This very young singer and student of the legendary singer, educator and community jazz activist, Antoinette Montague at the Oscar Schindler Performing Arts Center Jazz Festival in West Orange, NJ. (NOTE: I'm still trying to find out the young singers name)

Maya Days with Hilary Kole in the background

Lisa Fischer, mopping up the sweat on Orrin Evans head! Lisa's head was well protected from the elements that day!



Riza Printup exiting the stage at the Oscar Schindler Performing Arts Center Jazz Festival in West Orange, NJ. Husband and trumpeter Marcus Printup behind the strings..

NICHOLA POPE

PHOTOS BY MONIKA S JAKUBOWSKA

NICHOLA POPE HERSTORY

Saxophonist and composer Nichola Pope brought the house down when she shared 'Herstory' to a live audience for the first time, premiering at the EFG London Jazz Festival, Nov 14th at Karamel Club.

Nichola tours internationally, playing and recording as a sought-after session musician and has appeared at major UK festivals including Glastonbury, BST Hyde Park, Isle of Wight Festival, Latitude, and prestigious venues such as Royal Festival Hall and The O2 along with renowned jazz venues including Ronnie Scott's, the 606 Club, the Jazz Cafe, and the Vortex Jazz Club. But this is the first time she is stepping into the role of composer and leading on her own, a very personal project.

Through Herstory, Nichola offers a deeply personal and emotionally resonant experience through music and chronicles pivotal points in her life that have shaped and contributed to who she is today, and gives us all a glimpse as to how she views life.

You are an internationally sought after saxophonist, how did you find time to work on your own material?

My view on life is you can only do a day in a day, so use the day wisely. I do count the days but I also make the days count!

You are constantly performing across the world and a diverse range of music almost always where the saxophone is a strong focal point (Billy Joel and Sting spring to mind). How are you able to perfect so much material?!

I put in the hours and drink a lot of tea.

You are a Yanagisawa Artist – can you tell us about this relationship and what drew you to their instruments?

I love my Yanagisawa S-9030 Solid Silver Soprano and Yanagisawa B992 Bronze Baritone. They are stunning instruments of the highest class and perform and react exactly as you wish as a player. They have wonderful tone, projection and resonance whilst being beautifully crafted and ergonomic to my hands. I was very proud when Yanagisawa approached me to endorse them and be a Yanagisawa Artist after they had followed my career playing their horns.

How have you found the experience of working on your own material for the first time?

I'd always harboured the ambition to create my own original compositions but had never allowed myself the time to do this, until Women in Jazz Media offered me the opportunity to do a show as part of this year's EFG London Jazz Festival. It was incredibly exciting though equally daunting to start the writing process, and when I came up with the concept for Herstory the project took on a whole new deeply personal resonance.

You spent some of your early years in the Middle East and this has played a role in shaping your music. How have your experiences in the Middle East impacted on your compositions?

The pieces relating to this time in my life reflect the duality of growing up in what was a very restrictive but evocative environment. The fears I felt as a child associated with being a westerner in the region at a time of great international tension, were juxtaposed with the beauty of the desert landscape, all whilst living in a culture where at the time the opportunity for me to learn, play or even listen to music didn't exist.

Can you talk us through your compositional process?

Having initially sketched out a number of working titles for the stories I wished to tell in Herstory, inspiration for each associated piece often came to me when walking through the countryside with Fred, my beautiful 14 year old black labrador. In a quiet and contemplative environment like that I was able to imagine the style and melodies etc. for each theme, but I only managed to carve out 3 actual days from my schedule as a busy working musician to sit at the piano with pencil and manuscript to get down on paper the parts that were swirling around my head.

As I did not have the luxury of extended rehearsal time, I worked with Nick Trepka to put recorded skeletons together of each of the tracks to realise the conceptions and more easily convey my intentions to the musicians that would be playing them.

With Carl Hudson (keys and analogue synth) Mirko Scarcia (electric and double bass) and Jamie Murray (drums) joining you on the night, the chemistry was palpable. What led you to working with these musicians?

This project is authentic to who I am both as a musician and my life experiences, therefore I approached musicians who I had previously worked with and who also brought their personality, musicianship and artistry to best reflect what I wish to hear.

The project features keyboardist Carl Hudson who I call 'The Wizard'. We met in a field at a festival – the rest is history (maybe I should say ourstory!) I met drummer Jamie 'Drumcat' Murray at one of London's session blow bands, and he introduced me to bassist Mirko Scarcia, when 'The Pope met The Italian'.

Now that you have performed this project live, are there plans for a recording? If so, when?

Yes — and we can't wait. We're heading into the studio in a few weeks to record, and we're really excited for what's coming next.

Are there any particular tracks you would like to highlight?

Phoenix – Thematically the title is pretty self-explanatory. If we're here, alive, then regardless of what's happening we are our own Phoenix. Collectively because we hold each other up and individually for just getting up and doing our day the best we can, taking onboard our personal responsibility to live life and honour this gift we are still blessed to have, and to live on in the names of those who for whatever reason can't.

Musically the piece opens with a bit of a roast, but then releases with a soaring phrase where 'the bird can fly', reflecting that moment in any decision where we must hold onto the truth that we always have the freedom of choice in any decision, no matter how hard the circumstances are, and to hold on to that autonomy knowing that this in itself is the essence of living life.

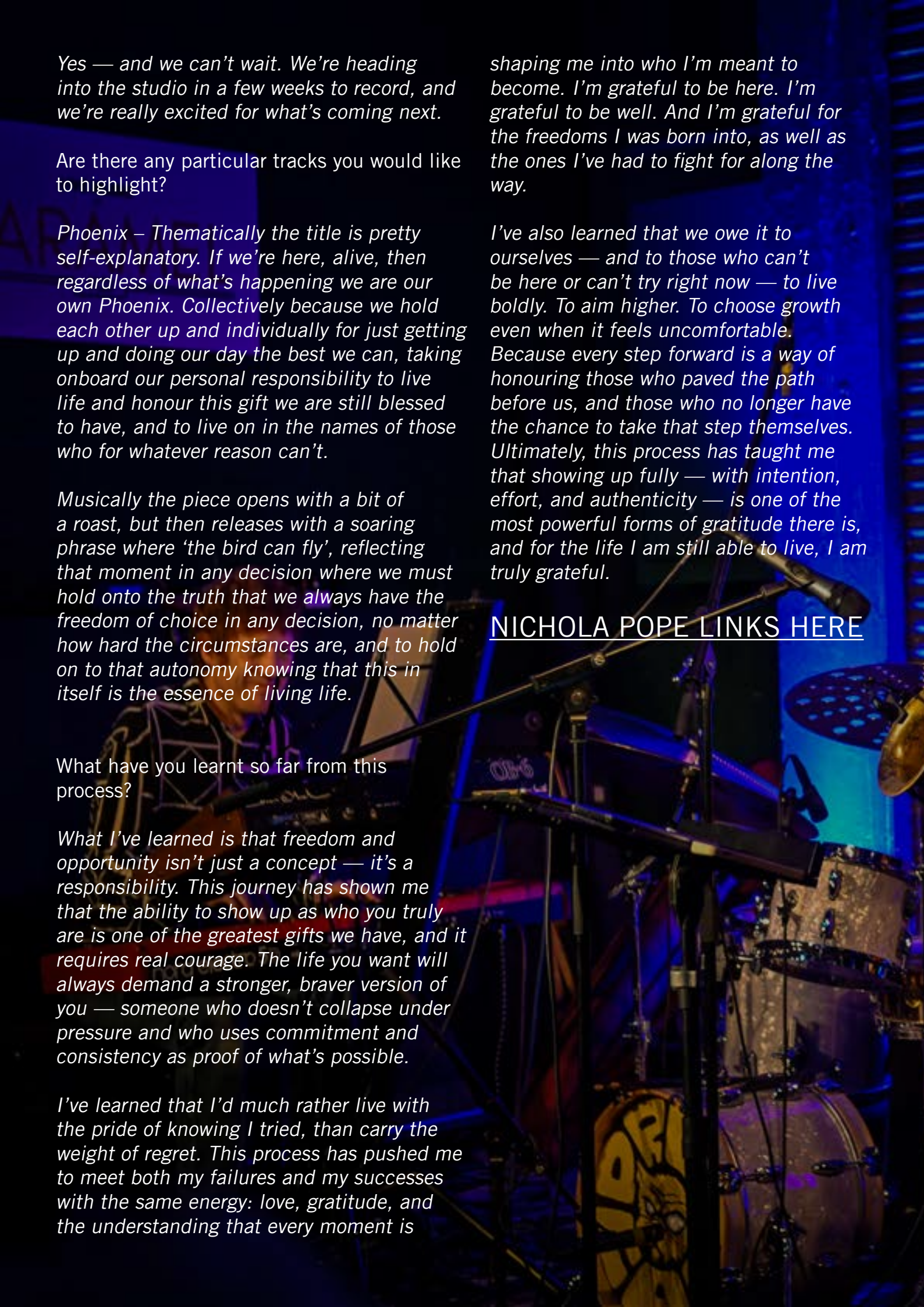
What have you learnt so far from this process?

What I've learned is that freedom and opportunity isn't just a concept — it's a responsibility. This journey has shown me that the ability to show up as who you truly are is one of the greatest gifts we have, and it requires real courage. The life you want will always demand a stronger, braver version of you — someone who doesn't collapse under pressure and who uses commitment and consistency as proof of what's possible.

I've learned that I'd much rather live with the pride of knowing I tried, than carry the weight of regret. This process has pushed me to meet both my failures and my successes with the same energy: love, gratitude, and the understanding that every moment is shaping me into who I'm meant to become. I'm grateful to be here. I'm grateful to be well. And I'm grateful for the freedoms I was born into, as well as the ones I've had to fight for along the way.

I've also learned that we owe it to ourselves — and to those who can't be here or can't try right now — to live boldly. To aim higher. To choose growth even when it feels uncomfortable. Because every step forward is a way of honouring those who paved the path before us, and those who no longer have the chance to take that step themselves. Ultimately, this process has taught me that showing up fully — with intention, effort, and authenticity — is one of the most powerful forms of gratitude there is, and for the life I am still able to live, I am truly grateful.

NICHOLA POPE LINKS HERE



PHOTOS BY MONIKA S JAKUBOWSKA

STICKS AND THRONES

Shining a light on drummers from around the world


WITH
MIGDALIA
VAN DER HOVEN


RED FIELDE

R-VAN KLEEFF

PHOTO BY KNOW. FILM

Migdalia Van Der Hoven: In Conversation with Red Fielder-van Kleeff

This is the 4th episode of our drummer focused series 'Sticks and Thrones' with host Migdalia Van Der Hoven, with our guest Red Fielder-van Kleeff…

Migdalia: Hello! This is Migdalia Van Der Hoven, welcome to Sticks and Thrones! This podcast is all about drums, with mostly female players from all around the globe. Today we are joined by my very good friend and colleague, Manchester based Red Fielder- van Kleeff!

Okay, so in order for people to know a little bit about you, especially in the jazz scene in the UK and all over the world… Tell us a little bit about yourself, what you are up to at the moment and all that jazz.

Red: So I am currently touring with Defying Gravity, which you are depping on for me… tomorrow! I am off to Brazil in a few weeks for a gig. I am very excited about that. Percussion gigs at parties and weddings, and weirdly a lot of Bavarian gigs recently with Octoberfest. Dressing up in lederhosen and playing in a beer garden!

M: Ahh, you're a bit like me, that one day you are in some crazy arena and the next day you are dressed up for a festival in a random location. That's the life!

So, just on to a bit of your background. What first inspired you to play the drums?

R: It's quite a funny story! When I was about 7 or 8, I left school to become home schooled and my mum asked one of the teachers if I was good at anything. And he was like 'Well… She's maybe got some rhythm so maybe try drums!'

M: I mean that teacher is a legend honestly!

R: Yeh! So it was from my lack of all other musical ability, that I could somewhat do some sort of rhythm. And here I am!

M: And your parents were supportive?

R: Yeh, I think my dad had an electric drumkit that he never used, so I started on that.

M: That's a good story, a very efficient story! Like, what shall we do? Oh, play drums okay, let's get her started. Amazing. So, what got you into jazz?

R: I started off with rock and heavy metal, but also a lot of salsa music. I grew up listening to these three. I had a teacher when I was 13 or 14, and he went… 'Right. Jazz.' And so from then it was 'oh this is cool, I like this.'

M: I guess a lot of what you were playing before has a lot to do with jazz. A lot of influences. Do you still play metal?

R: Not as much. Every now and again it sneaks into it, but jazz is so much more fun! There's a lot more freedom to do mad stuff, rather than constant heavy power. After a while it gets a bit repetitive and boring, not all of it, but some of it I feel like I need a change up. Lots of heavy 4/4. I like when you have the crazy time signature changing ones, but I personally find jazz more fun to play.

M: And do you still play Latin stuff?

R: Yes I do, I try a little bit on percussion but not very well! Latin jazz is one of my favourite things to play. Either really fast swing or faster latin jazz. I do like a ballad, don't get me wrong, but the fast stuff is where the fun is.

M: What is one of your favourite big gigs you've done?

R: Probably the tour last year where I spent a month on Elf, and it was like being back at University. Everyone in the same hotel, having coffee together in the morning, going to the pub, to the show, back to the pub, getting dinner together. It was very jazzy, big band-y. It was nice also having a tour, where I could set up on one day and not have to reset up or take anything down for another week!

M: That's the best thing isn't it. I think one of the biggest struggles is taking your own drum kit to venues or shows that don't have one.

R: I've been saying recently, my job is 60% driving, 20% loading and unloading and 20% playing.

M: So, what's been one of your funniest moments in shows or jazz gigs?

R: I played tambourine with the Ronnie Scotts Jazz Orchestra! It was hilarious, I was at the pub and they said come play tambourine! Now I'm principal tambourine! I was absolutely pissing myself the entire way through, I could not stop laughing.

M: Who is your biggest influence in the jazz world? Do you have a favourite band or artist?

R: To be honest, one of my favourite artists at the moment is probably RAYE, who's doing some lovely jazzy stuff. I love the blend of pop and jazz, a lot of the performances are a big band set up. It feels like it branches the worlds between pop and jazz a bit more. It's a bit like all the traditional session orchestras with Frank Sinatra and such, as it was the pop of that time, it feels like it is reviving that a bit.

M: And of course they use actual musicians, not using any fake instrumentation.
Do you have your own quartet or trio?

R: I've got a really stupid band. It's a karaoke big band and it's hilarious, called Big Bandeoke. We do mostly lyric videos, and backtrack arrangements. It's good fun!

M: Asking you what your next project is seems like a massive question because you're like me in that sense that you do bits and bobs as you go. But are there any gigs you are looking forward to?

R: Brazil. So I'm playing with Bryony Jarman-Pinto later in October. I have seen photos of the venue, it's really beautiful. I think it's in São Paulo. It's a double sided theatre, with the stage in the middle and seating going up both sides. I think it's going to be spectacular. It is neo-soul jazz and quite delicate in places, so the band is really tight. Me on drums, guitar, flute, Bryony singing and her sister on backing vocals. We had a lovely gig down in Luton at The Bear a few weeks ago, and it was probably the quietest I've ever played. I got a lot of compliments on my soft playing, I was there so focussed trying to go for stuff. Then I'd realise, maybe I need a bit of power behind me for certain things to happen, but that will be loud! So I had a few moments where I'd go for something and midway through, I had to pull back and come down. It was really fun.

M: I've had function gigs with decibel meters, asking me to play with brushes. And I had to say: Dude I can't play Bruno Mars with brushes, trust me on this! So then I'd just grab my sticks.

R: I had that once. I was in a brass octet in a massive conference room. We were not going to be mic'd up originally, and they said there is a limiter in the room, so could you bring quieter drums! Well I can play quieter! Then we got into the sound check and realised we couldn't hear much at all as the room was huge and the sound was not carrying.

M: With some sound engineers, for everything they want to use a screen but then the sound just bounces off.

R: I had a time with one sound engineer, and I took a small kick drum to the gig, it was like a variety show theatre sort of thing. And there was no port in the front, and the sound engineer got very annoyed as he didn't know how to mic it without putting the mic into the bass drum. He didn't just want to put it up against the front, which you can do, and he was fuming in such a cramped space. He then takes the head off to mic it, and knocks half the bolts out and loses them!

M: So on top of all these issues, what is another issue you face as a female player in the industry?

R: When you get opportunities, people think you got the opportunity just because they need more girls, or instantly disregard it because a guy has asked you to do it saying: 'you know why he's asked you to do it!'

M: How long have you been doing this professionally?

R: 4 ish years. Starting from 2nd year of uni really.

M: And you only do freelancing and jazz stuff?

R: Yes mostly, I've done a bit of cover teaching but I hate teaching, I covered for a whole term in a school and music centre two days a week. Even so, I just didn't enjoy it. I don't mind having private students where you can teach them in a way that you enjoy, with students that are keen and interested. I just don't see much point in teaching a student something if they don't wholly believe in it. Like 'let's sit and do this grade 2 song again and again', I just don't think it's helpful.

M: It's better coming from actual experience.

R: I did have the odd student at this place who was very keen and serious, and I could sit and chat to them and offer opportunities and ideas to them. They weren't just doing it to skip other lessons.

M: Is there anything you would like to say or share that you think would inspire a young female player to pick up the drums or keep going on this journey?

R: It's very fun! You get to do a lot of different things.

M: It's worth going through the hard bits to get to the really fun parts!

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RED LINKS CLICK HERE

Listen to the episode here


PHOTO BY MONIKA S JAKUBOWSKA


Photo by Jeff Banks
PHOTO BY ANNE BENNISON
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Multi-Talented ~ Ms. Freda Payne

BY PAULETTE JACKSON

I have been truly blessed, because of what I do in the music/entertainment and media industry, to have met and actually spoken to some wonderful, iconic artists; a few I have grown up listening to and later in life, been able to share their music on my own platforms. One of those phenomenal artists is no other than iconic singer and actress, Freda Payne. I had the pleasure of meeting and speaking to Ms. Payne back in 2017 in Detroit, MI, where she was one of the honorees for the National Rhythm & Blues Hall of Fame, for her many contributions to the music industry. She is so down to earth and pure class with a capital C!

Ms. Payne is still going strong singing everything from R&B to now, jazz, appearing at various jazz venues putting on fabulous shows! She has the magic touch and showcases beautifully her gifts; still gracing us all with her angelic voice.

In today's music, it is refreshing to see and hear those who have paved the way for so many, out here performing better than ever, and that those of us who grew up listening to legends like Freda Payne get to witness this music greatness!

For me, Freda Payne is one of those artists whose experiences in this industry is like taking a class on how to be poised and professional on stage, and how to carry yourself as a woman, as an artist, in and out of the spotlight (younger female artist, take notes). Ms. Payne is truly multi-gifted, she is also a published author! Make sure to check out her book "Band of Gold" (Freda Payne and Mark Bego) wherever books are sold. I believe it will give you full insight to the wonder that is Freda Payne and how all her splendor came to be.

If you are a true fan of live music, I urge all of you to go see at least one of her live shows and tell your friends and family! I for one will make every effort to do just that. It is a treasure for us all to have Ms. Payne continuing to bless us with her voice. Most recently, Ms. Payne has been gracing the stage with her tribute to the greats of Jazz: Honoring the Legendary Ladies of Jazz!

Personal note: Ms. Payne, I will say this again, it has been such an honor to have met and spoken with you, it is a memory I will cherish forever. You are truly a Band of Gold! For more information about Ms. Payne's book and upcoming events, visit her website: www.fredapayne.net and follow her social media.

Now go and be your creative selves!

Photo by Donna Wheelwright


NEW
RELEASES

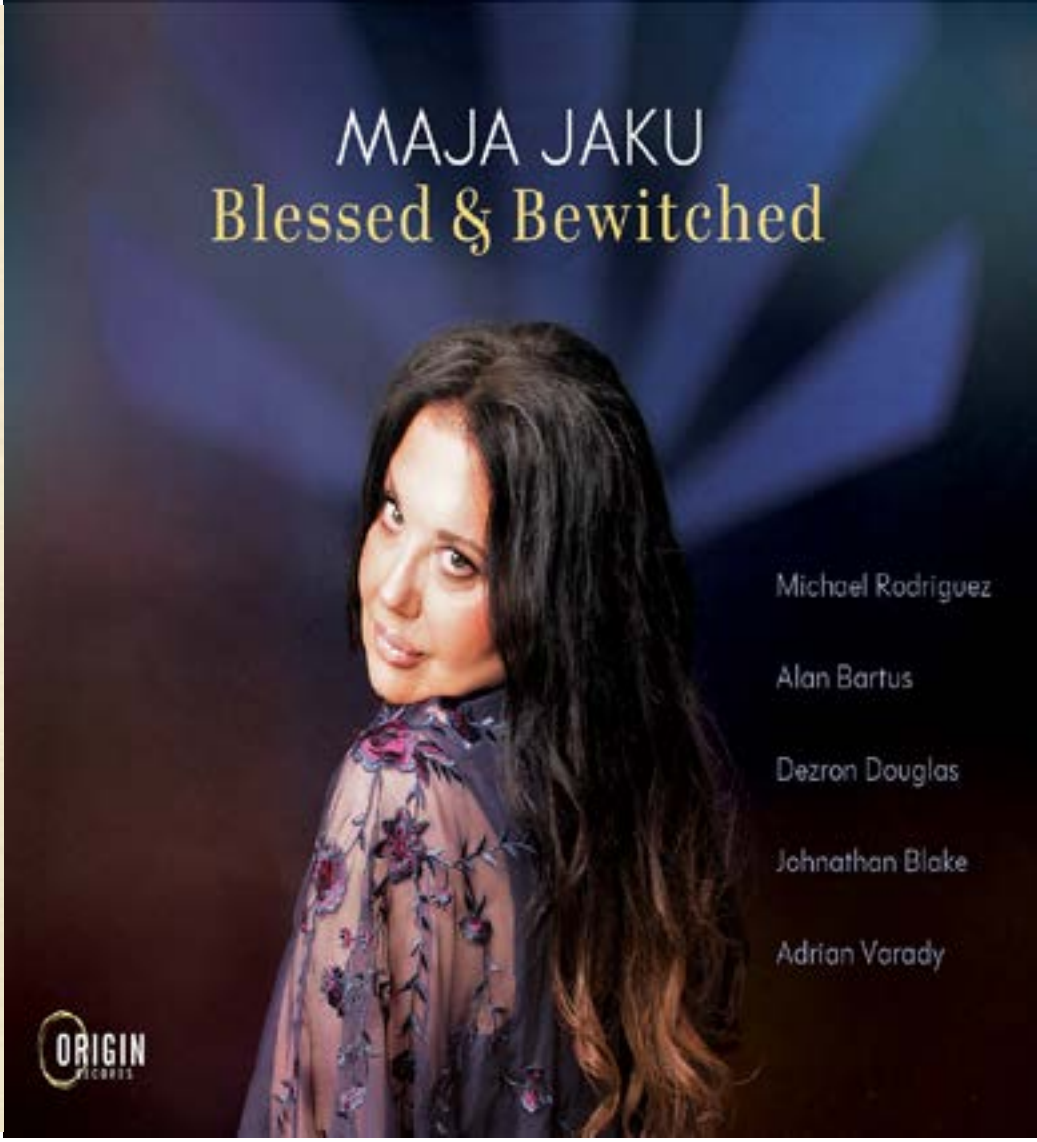
Angelique Kidjo by Tatiana Gorilovsky


China Moses


ABSINTHE
RAMONA
HORVATH
TRIO
GUEST
ANDRE VILLEGER
SWING
ALLEY


SARAH ELIZABETH CHARLES


it's complicated...


MAJA JAKU
Blessed & Bewitched
Michael Rodriguez
Alan Bartus
Dezron Douglas
Johnathan Blake
Adrian Vorady
ORIGIN

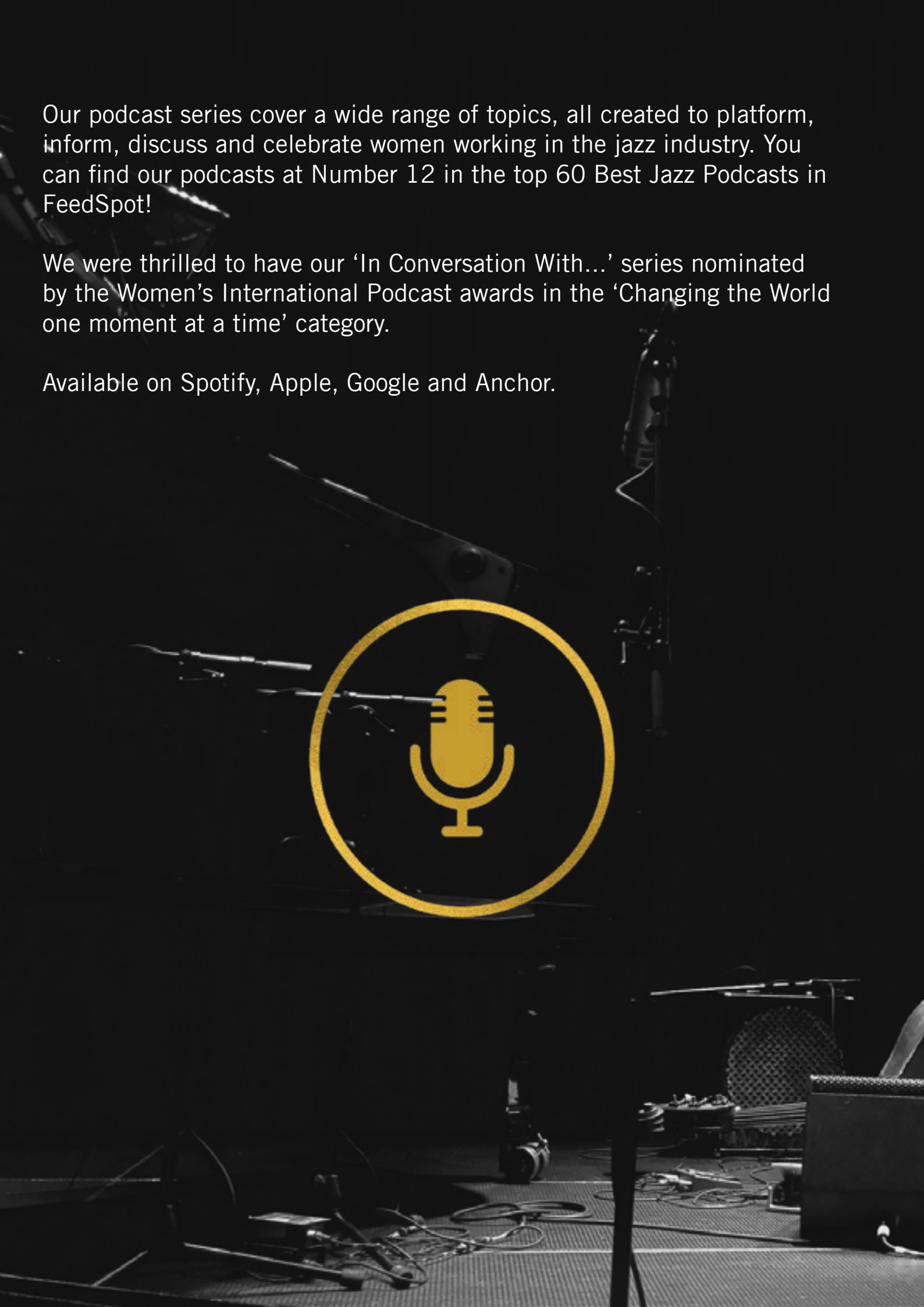

DAWN


Emma Rawicz
Inkyra
ACT

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!

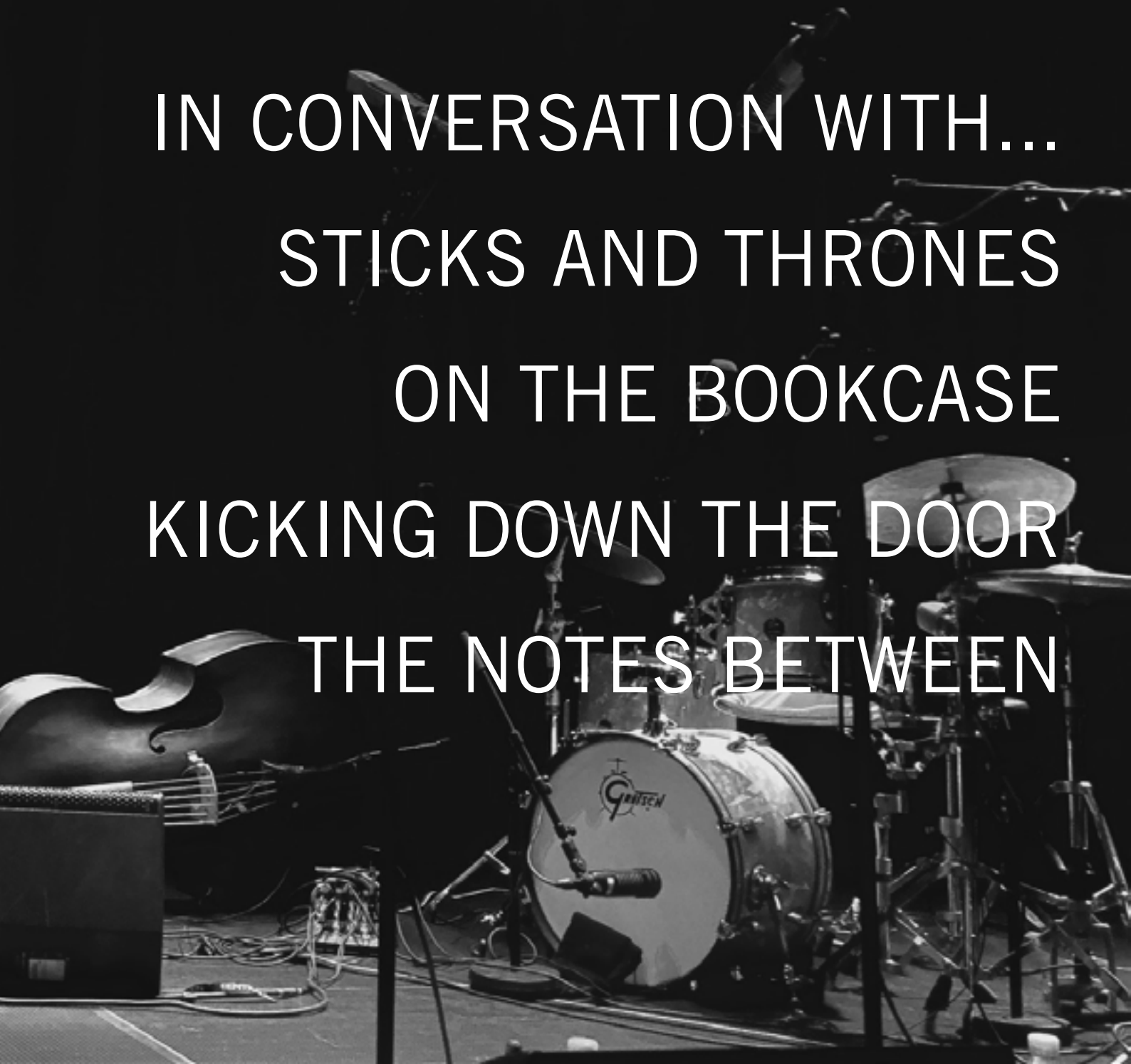
We were thrilled to have our ‘In Conversation With...’ series nominated by the Women’s International Podcast awards in the ‘Changing the World one moment at a time’ category.

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

THE NOTES BETWEEN

ON THE BOOKCASE

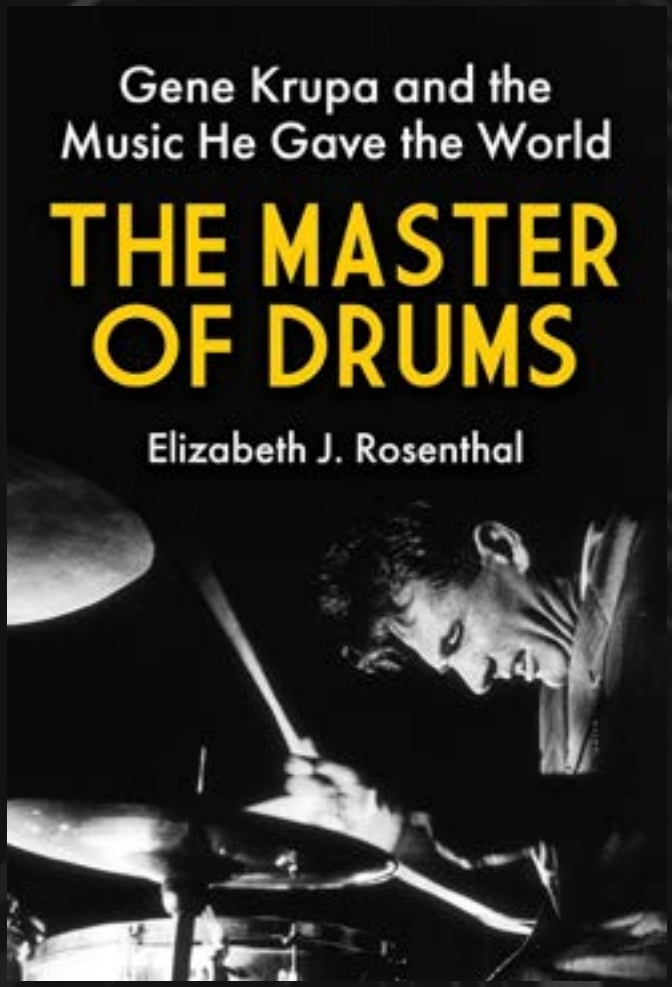
The Women In Jazz Media bookcase is all about platforming female authors from across the world. With over 100 books, all the books included on our bookcase are also on our physical bookcase and we are very happy to share them with you all.

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:

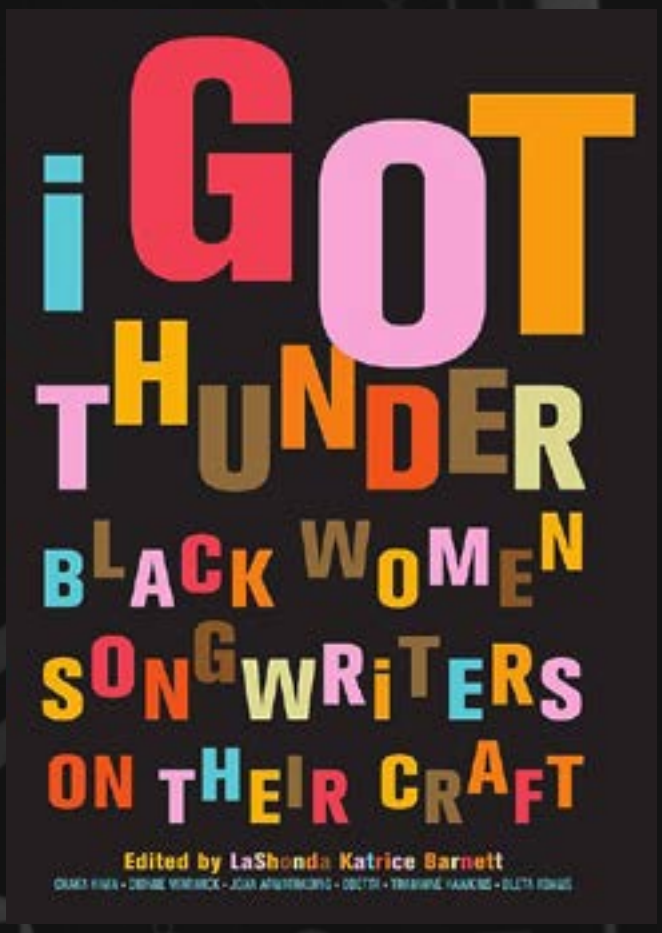
Jordannah Elizabeth
Maria Golia
Dr Tammy Kernodle
Monika Herzig
Paulette Jackson
Dr Joan Cartwright
Tish Oney
Maxine Gordon
Stephanie Stein Crease
Arlette Hovinga
Judith Tick
Dr Alexis McGee

VISIT OUR BOOKCASE HERE


FORTY HITS BY PIONEERING WOMEN OF POPULAR MUSIC
SONGS SHE WROTE
MICHAEL G. GARBER
FOREWORD BY JANIE BRADFORD AND TISH ONEY


Gene Krupa and the Music He Gave the World
THE MASTER OF DRUMS
Elizabeth J. Rosenthal


A NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW NOTABLE BOOK
HIGH TIMES HARD TIMES
ANITA O'DAY with GEORGE EELLS
WITH A NEW EPILOGUE


i GOT THUNDER
BLACK WOMEN SONGWRITERS ON THEIR CRAFT
Edited by LaShonda Katrice Barnett

ON THE Women in Jazz Media PLAYLIST

VULA MALINGA BY TATIANA GORILOVSKY

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

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Photo courtesy of Jazz Connect

Rin Seo Collective
City Suite
Cellar Music Group

Composer, conductor, and pianist Rin Seo's new album is another shining example of recent projects written for large ensembles by young composers. Korean born, but now living in New York, Ms. Seo combines a modern aesthetic with folk influences from her native land. Some easily recognized names are in her collective, including trumpeter Ingrid Jensen and reed master Steve Wilson, along with many other fine musicians. Some tasty guitar work provided by Sebastian Noelle. Adam Birnbaum occupies the piano chair. Highly recommended if you are into modern large orchestral works!

PHOTOS BY Cellar Music Group

RIN SEO

KELSEY MINES

Photo by Tiffany Tomkinson

Kelsey Mines
Everything Sacred, Nothing Serious
OA2

Bassist and vocalist Kelsey Mines' first album in the modern jazz aesthetic (she has recorded albums in other genres) is a real gem. All the compositions on the album are by Ms. Mines. Her group consists of piano, bass, drums, percussion, trombone, guitar, and is rounded out by Elsa Nilsson on flutes. I have used several tracks on my radio program recently!

Yoko Yates
Eternal Moments
Banka Records

Pianist and composer Yoko Yates has crafted a beautiful and highly melodic album with “Eternal Moments”, using a trio of Yoko-san on piano, Jeff Hirshfeld on drums and Aryeh Kobrinsky on bass – then adding Jamie Baum on flutes and Sam Sadigursky on clarinet, bass clarinet and alto saxophone. Her use of these instruments to provide coloration makes me think of her compositions as tone poems. Originally from northern Japan, her early influences of classical, rock and other genres clearly influence her compositions. Beautiful!

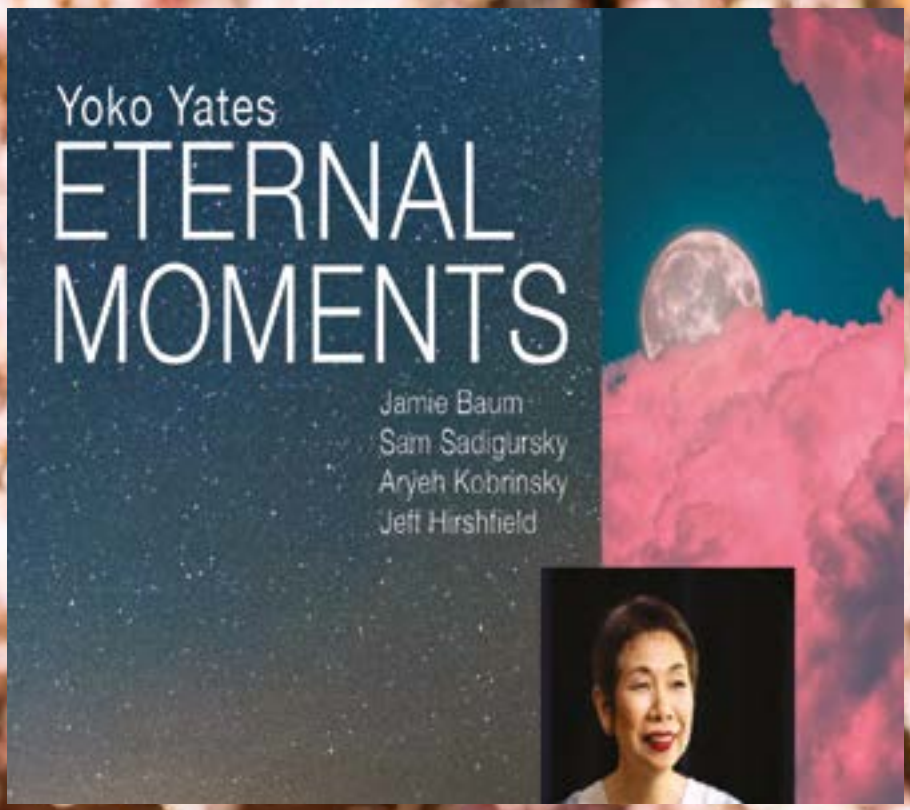


Photo by Erika Kapin
YOKO
YATES

JEN ALLEN

Jen Allen
Possibilities
Truth Revolution Recording Collective

Keyboardist and composer Jen Allen's "Possibilities" is a highly personal statement by her, with seven of the nine tracks her own compositions. Ms. Allen plays piano, but it is her Rhodes and Wurlitzer work that I find most compelling. Jonathan Barber, Matt Dwonszyk, and Dan Liparini accompany her – along with two vocalists: Alejandra Sofia and Leala Cyr. Recorded on one of those labels that I know will always put out interesting and appealing works!

Photo by Corey Lynn Tucker Photography


Jen Allen
POSSIBILITIES

Margherita Fava
Murrina
Margherita Fava

Those who listen to my radio program regularly know that I have a particular penchant for piano trios. This is one of my favorite piano trio releases of 2025. Pianist and composer Margherita Fava joins up with Jonathan Barber on drums and Brandon Ross for a side of mostly her own compositions. A very rhythmically appealing album, which opens with the entrancingly odd-metered “No Clue”. The trio also do a clever arrangement of Johannes Brahms “Intermezzo, Op. 117, No. 1”; and, Ellington’s “Satin Doll”. Piano trio fans need to pick this one up! Consider buying a copy and support the artists!!

MARGHERITA FAVA

Photo by Elijah Lightfoot

KATE WYATT

Kate Wyatt Trio
Murmurations
Kate Wyatt

Pianist Kate Wyatt joins with bassist Adrian Vedady and drummer Louis-Vincent Hamel for a deeply reflective and introspective piano trio set. "Murmuration" consists of all compositions by the band members – each contributing to the writing but begins with their own unique arrangement of Kurt Weill's "Mack the Knife". It has been a wonderful year for piano trio releases – this one certainly has contributed to that!


Photo by Julia Marois

Carmen Bradford
Carmen Sings Carmen
Artist Alliance Records

Jazz royalty sings jazz royalty. How else to describe this project??! Acclaimed and celebrated jazz vocalist Carmen Bradford takes on the repertoire of the great Carmen McRae. Songs by Monk, Brubeck, Gershwin, Rogers are included – even one by Leon Russell! Ms. Bradford, a multiple Grammy nominee known for her early work with the Count Basie Orchestra and later a host of famous collaborators, is spot on with her vocal delivery. Backed by the hard swinging Compass Jazz Orchestra, this album is bound to delight lovers of big band jazz with vocals.

Photo by Andrew “Dru” Phillips

KELLY GREEN

Photo by Margherita Andreani.

Kelly Green
Corner of My Dreams
Green Soul Studios

Pianist Kelly Green's newest release is an album of all her own originals – one of the reasons this is one of my top picks of the year! Luca Soul Rosenfeld on bass, Evan Hyde on drums, Andromeda Turre on percussion are richly augmented by a string quartet and background vocals (Ms. Green is the lead vocalist on tracks including vocals). Her adept piano playing nicely complements her beautifully melodic and harmonically rich compositions.

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Pianist Dawn Clement le
Buster Williams on bass
on her new Origin release
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Priester, Buster Williams,
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Photo by Lauren Desberg

Clement
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and Matt Wilson on drums
"Delight". Sometimes this
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Tyner and Elvis Costello. In
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Thelonious Monk and Arthur
In total, a very nice mixed
rtoire!

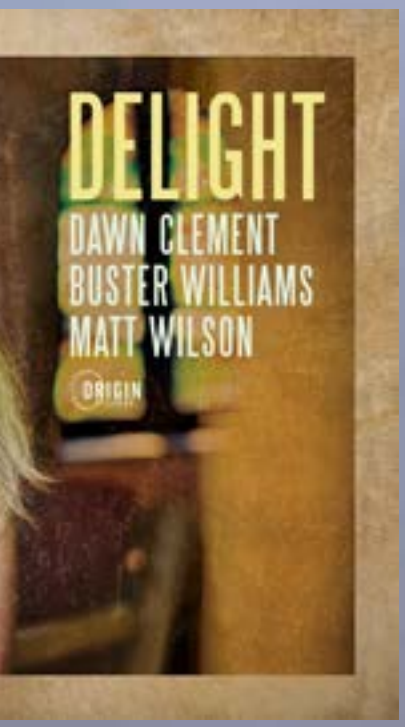


Photo by Chris Drukker

CARMEN STAAF

Carmen Staaf
Sounding Line
Sunnyside

Pianist Carmen Staaf takes a stab at “Conversations on the Music of Mary Lou Williams and Thelonious Monk” (sub-title of the album), and she deftly succeeds! An excellent coterie of musicians accompany her in this conversation: Ben Goldberg, Dillon Vado, Ambrose Akinmusire, Hamir Atwal, and Darren Johnston. Of course, Monk has always been a center of attention, but there has been a considerable interest in Mary Lou Williams in recent years, both in print and in recordings. If you are interested in either composer and pianist, you owe it to yourself to pick this one up!

LAUREN SCALES

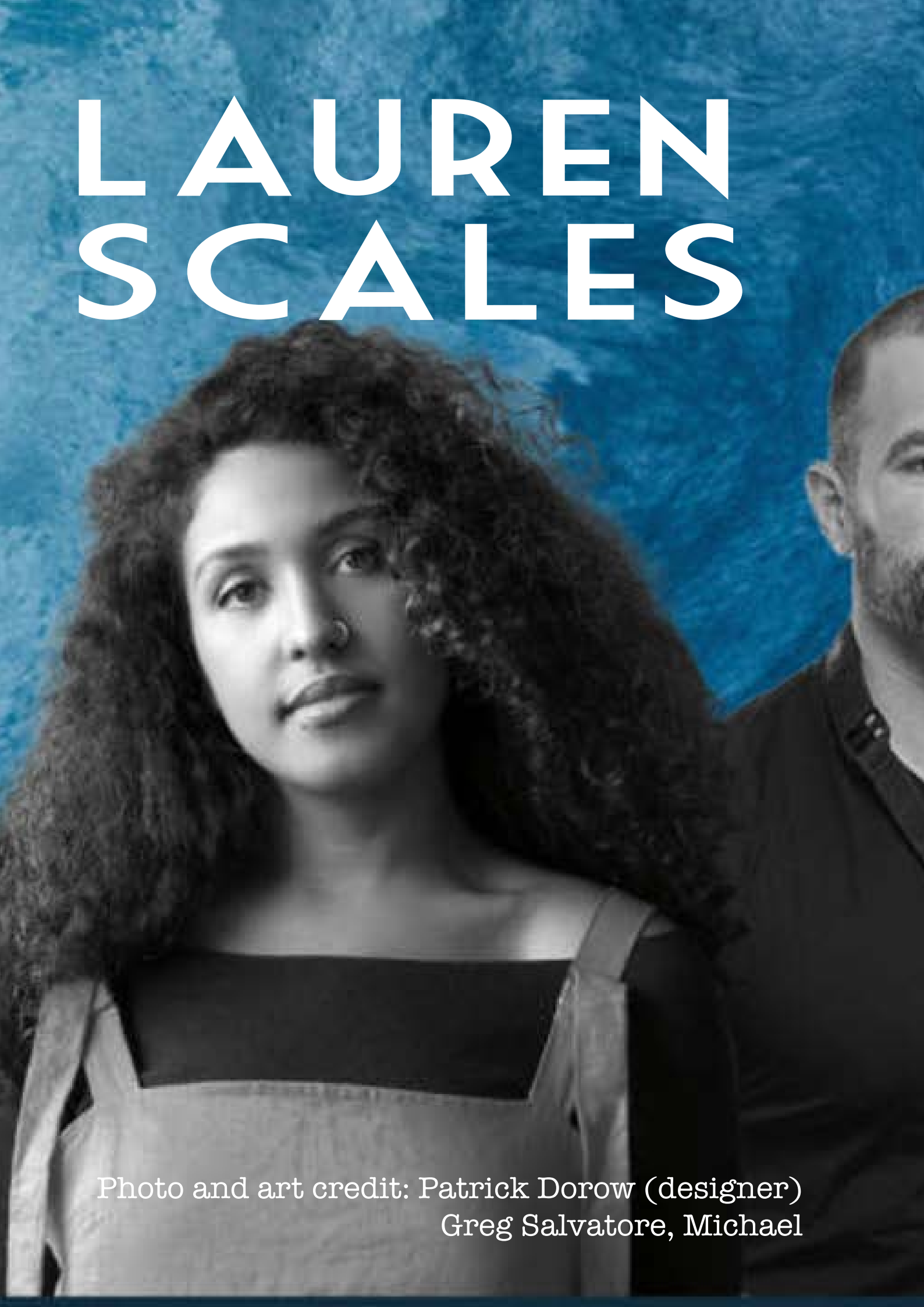


Photo and art credit: Patrick Dorow (designer)
Greg Salvatore, Michael

Lauren Scales
Many Rivers
Truth Revolution Recording Collective

Vocalist Lauren Scales co-produced this collection of songs by composers as diverse as Jimmy Cliff, Neil Diamond, and Monk/Hawkins/Hendricks – plus she chips in with a couple of her own. A first-call group of musicians accompany her on "Many Rivers": Richie Barshay, Luques Curtis, Mike Flanagan, Chris Grasso, Charles Haynes and Steve Davis! A nice track to check out first is her/their rendition of Frank Loesser's "Never Will I Marry".

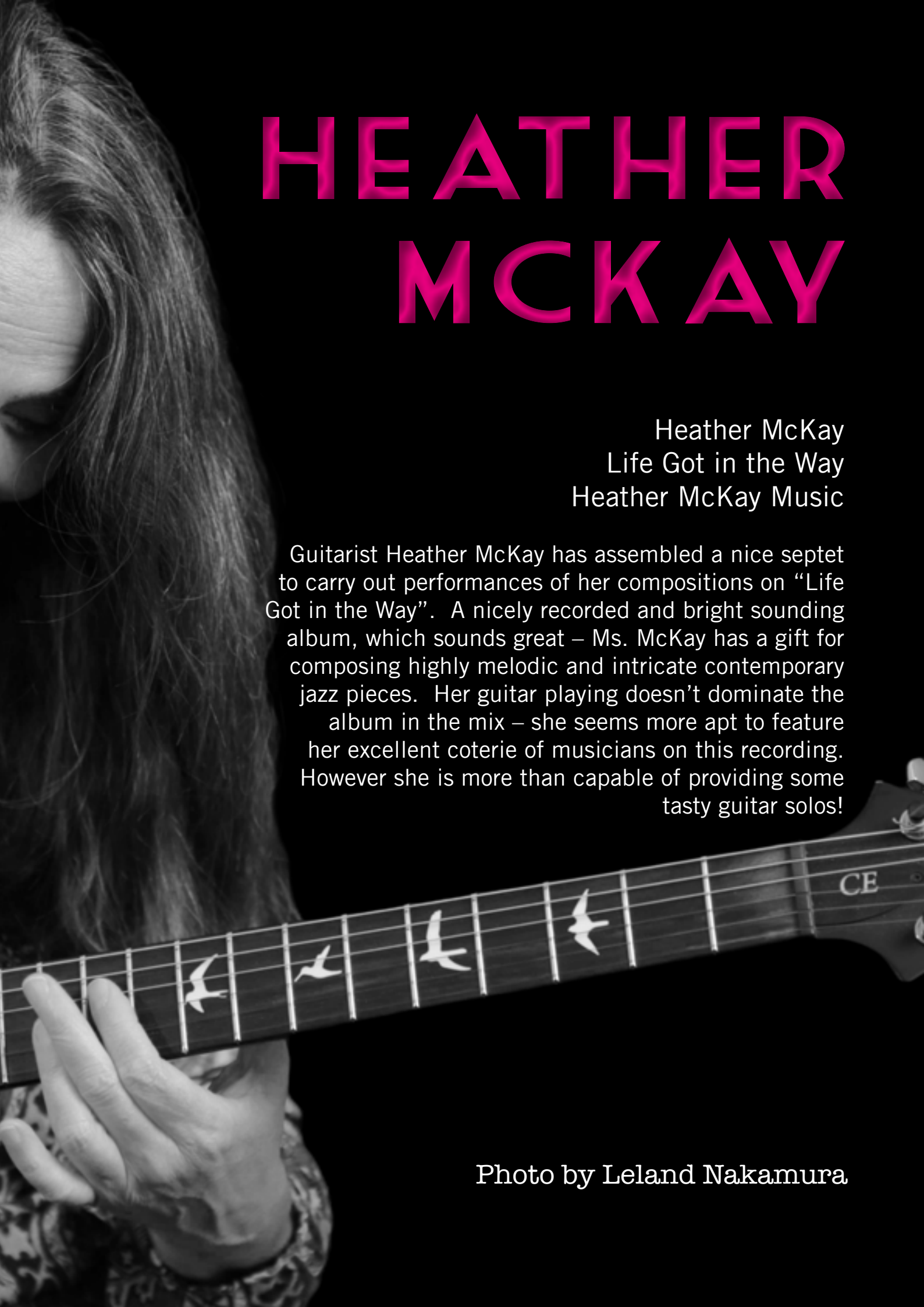
LINDA DACHTYL

Linda Dachtyl
Full Steam Ahead
Chicken Coup Records

Ohio, U.S.A. resident, keyboardist, composer, educator Linda Dachtyl may be better known in some circles for her work in the progressive rock genre, but she is equally a well-versed jazz player, having performed with a number of jazz orchestras, vocalists, and notable small ensembles. Her latest release, "Full Steam Ahead", includes compositions by Gene Ludwig, Duke Ellington, Burt Bacharach, James Moody and others – as well as a couple of her own. Husband Cary Dachtyl is here on drums, and Don Hales nicely fits in on guitar – with guests Mark Donavan providing sax on some tracks. If you are a lover of Hammond B3 organ, then this release is a must for you! The fact that she records for Tony Monaco's Chicken Coup Records is about as strong a testimony as she can have for her masterful B3 playing!

Photo by Charlotte Rudd


Life Got in the Way
Heather McKay



HEATHER MCKAY

Heather McKay
Life Got in the Way
Heather McKay Music

Guitarist Heather McKay has assembled a nice septet to carry out performances of her compositions on "Life Got in the Way". A nicely recorded and bright sounding album, which sounds great – Ms. McKay has a gift for composing highly melodic and intricate contemporary jazz pieces. Her guitar playing doesn't dominate the album in the mix – she seems more apt to feature her excellent coterie of musicians on this recording. However she is more than capable of providing some tasty guitar solos!

Photo by Leland Nakamura


Performing at the Martin Hummel memorial event
Photo by Monika S Jakubowska
606 Club
NOEMI NUTI