

# WOMEN IN JAZZ MEDIA

THE MAGAZINE



Brigitte Behara  
Dee Dee Bridgewater  
Endea Owens  
Enid Farber  
Germana Stella La Sorsa  
Isabel Marquez  
Jane Cornwell  
Kim Cypher  
Laura Impallomeni  
Lisa Rich  
Monika S Jakubowska  
Paulette Jackson  
Sally Greene OBE  
Sandra Booker  
Syreetta Thompson  
Tatiana Gorilovsky  
Tulani Bridgewater-Kowalski  
UK Black Female Photographers  
Community  
Vidya  
Vuyo Giba

and so much more!

JULY 2024

# COVER PHOTO: SYREETA THOMPSON BY KEITH MAJOR

## THE WOMEN IN THIS EDITION:

Alexis Cole  
Amina Claudine Myer  
Amina Figarova  
Angie Wells  
April Varner  
Boitshoko Soulstring  
Boitumelo Pearl Mpebe  
Brigitte Beraha  
Carmen Staaf  
Cecile MClorin Salvant  
Chaka Kahn  
China Moses  
Dee Dee Bridgewater  
Diana Torti  
Dionne Warwick  
Endea Owens  
Enid Farber  
Esther Bennett  
Evita Polidoro  
Evelyn Glennie  
Germana Stella la Sorsa  
Hiromi  
Idit Shner  
Iris Trio  
Isabel Marquez  
Jane Cornwell  
Jas Kayser  
Jemella Ukaegbu  
Jihee Heo  
Jo Harrop  
Katy Hurt  
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Lakecia Benjamin  
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Laura Impallomeni

Lily Dior  
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Lisa Rich  
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Mariah Parker  
Melissa Aldana  
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Nicole Glover  
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Paulette Jackson  
Rachel Croft  
Rosa Brunello  
Rosie Frater Taylor  
Sally Greene OBE  
Samara Joy  
Sandra Booker  
Seulah Noh  
Sunny Kim  
Sylvia Moy  
Syreeta Thompson  
Tammy Kernodle  
Tara Middleton  
Tatiana Gorilovksy

Tina Carr  
Tulani Bridgewater-Kowalski  
Vimala Rowe  
Vidya  
Vuyo Giba  
Wendy Kirkland

## OUR GUEST CONT

We are always grateful to our many participants and  
like to give special thanks to our guest contributors

Enid Farber, Nick Lea, Vuyo Giba, Jane Cornwell  
special shout out to Dr Bradley Stone who is an  
honorary member of the team!

# JULY 2024 MAGAZINE TEAM

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

[Click here for information about our magazine team](#)

[Click here for all our Women in JAZZ Media links](#)



## CONTRIBUTORS

members that support our work and would like to be contributors for this edition:

Cornwell, Mike Cypher, Ray Jones, and a number of others who is fast becoming an

PHOTO OF MADELINE BELL BY MONIKA S JAKUBOWSKA

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PHOTO OF JAS KAYSE

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## ON THE PLAYLIST WITH DR BRAD STONE

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Melissa Aldana

Jihee Heo

Iris Trio

Amina Figarova

Idit Shner

Lakecia Benjamin

Alexis Cole

Nicole Glover

Sunny Kim

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

We are dedicating this edition to our team member Sandra Booker who sadly passed away a short time ago after losing her battle with cancer. Sandra was a fierce advocate for the unseen and the unheard and was never afraid to question, challenge and speak out. Many of us fear the consequences of speaking out, especially women in the music industry, for fear of being branded as 'difficult' and not getting booked. But this fear is far reaching. Many, many discussions about inappropriate, disrespectful, questionable behaviour happen behind the scenes with all genders, but the fear of consequence puts us in a place of constant concern with no action and therefore, no change. We need an environment where we can openly discuss without fear, otherwise, we cannot progress. Sandra was not afraid of consequences. She was fearless. This edition is full of fearless women. Women who are changing the landscape both in front and behind the scenes.

As always, I - we - are grateful for the overwhelming support for our work. The work we do has a clear goal - the dream that everyone can work in an encouraging, supportive, equal and healthy environment. A place we are all genuinely not only welcomed but wanted irrelevant of gender, age, race, sexual orientation and physical identity. A place where we know the world is a better place when we are all in it together, as one.

Fiona Ross, Founder

WE ARE BEYOND

Our patrons inspire  
patrons - Maxine C

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# DR TAMMY

PHOTO PROVIDED BY TAMMY KERNODLE

## THRILLED TO WELCOME AND ANNOUNCE OUR SECOND WOMEN IN JAZZ MEDIA PATRON: DR TAMMY L KERNODLE.

ire us and are present in all of the work we do and to have two such incredible women as our  
Gordon and Tammy Kernodle - is such an honour and a true privilege and we will strive to be  
deserving of this honour.

y L. Kernodle is University Distinguished Professor in the Department of Music, who special-  
in African American music (concert and popular) and gender studies in music. She is also an  
e of the American Studies Program, Critical Race and Ethnic Studies Program, and the Wom-  
der, and Sexuality Studies Program. Her scholarship explores the intersection of the politics  
round gender and racial identity, performance practice and genre. Her work has appeared in  
eer-reviewed journals including American Studies, Musical Quarterly, Black Music Research  
l, The Journal of the Society of American Music (JSAM), American Music Research Journal,  
Catholic Historian, and the Journal of the American Musicological Society (JAMS). She also  
a contributor to The African American Lectionary Project, the Smithsonian Anthology of Hip  
l Rap and the Carnegie Hall Digital Timeline of African American Music. Her scholarship also  
ears in numerous anthologies and reference works including Women's Voices Across Musical  
s, John Coltrane and Black America's Quest for Freedom: Spirituality and the Music, and The  
Cambridge Companion to Women in Music Since 1900.

Tammy is the author of biography *Soul on Soul: The Life and Music of Mary Lou Wil-  
liams*, served as Associate Editor of the three-volume *Encyclopedia of African Ameri-  
can Music* and was also one of the Editors for the revision of the *New Grove Encyclope-  
dia of American Music*. Tammy also served as the Scholar in Residence for the Women  
in Jazz Initiative at the American Jazz Museum in Kansas City from 1999 until 2001.  
She has worked closely with a number of educational programs including the Kennedy  
Center's Mary Lou Williams Women in Jazz Festival, Jazz@Lincoln Center, NPR, Cana-  
dian Public Radio, the Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame, and BBC. Kernodle is currently serv-  
ing as scholarly consultant with New World Symphony's Harlem Renaissance initia-  
tive, which seeks to elevate the music and voices of black artisans.

From 2012-2016, Tammy served as a scholarly consultant for the exhibits enti-  
tled "Musical Crossroads" at the National Museum of African American History  
and Culture. She appears in a number of award-winning documentaries includ-  
ing *Mary Lou Williams: The Lady Who Swings the Band* and *Girls in the Band*,  
*Miles Davis: Birth of the Cool*, and *How It Feels to Be Free*. In 2014, she re-  
ceived the Effective Educator Award from the Miami University Alumni Asso-  
ciation and in 2018 was awarded the Benjamin Harrison Medallion. The Harri-  
son Award is the highest award given to a Miami University faculty member in  
recognition of their research, teaching and service. In 2021 she was promoted  
to the rank of University Distinguished Professor. She is the Past President of  
the Society for American Music.

# L KERNODLE



PHOTO BY KEITH MAJOR



# SYREETA THOMPSON





PHOTO BY KEITH MAJOR

# SYREETA THOMPSON THE TRUMPET LADY

**S**yreeta Thompson aka The Trumpet Lady is incredible. A trailblazer for female instrumentalists across the globe, her upcoming documentary 'Blow Yo Horn: Making Music in A Man's World' is highly anticipated and causing much excitement across the globe. Charlotte Keefe and Fiona Ross spent some time with Syreeta talking about all things trumpet!

**How did the trumpet first become part of your life?**

*I started playing the trumpet to be honest with you because it was the loudest instrument in the band! And know, you don't have any reeds, you just put the mouthpiece in and there you go. You can play on a 7C forever you know... the more I began to play the more I learned that it's an instrument that has many voices. It can have a smooth voice but we can also roar like a lion and being women, we have so many emotional days - some days when we are maybe an emotional eater, some days we're not feeling it, some days we want to curse everyone... and I felt like I could devote all those same emotions through my instrument so that's the reason I chose the trumpet. But then I started realising that there are not a lot of gig opportunities, unless you play the piano or drums or a rhythm section instrument. There were not a lot of performing opportunities to work consistently unless I played in a big band but then I would get stereotyped with playing an all girl big band so I tried to find a way to make what I do cool because I love music! I love playing music and I'm not going to stop!*

**How many trumpets do you have? Let's talk gear!**

*I'm very simple. I have a Yamaha and play on a 1C and a 3C mouthpiece but I practise on a 7C. I practise on a 7C mouthpiece because it's a band instrument and if you can play a 7C you could play them all. I actually like playing on raggedy instruments more than I do a new one. Instruments that are broken in more. The more beat up they are - and I know this sounds crazy - but the more beat up they are, the better they play. But you know when you're doing a show or a concert, you can't bring in beat up instruments but I actually love playing on instruments when the bell is kind of dented. I keep trumpets all over the place. I've got one in my trunk, my home studio, I have three or four sitting out because when it gets down to it, I need to pick it up and I need to be able to just play. I have a small pocket trumpet. I've a black trumpet, a white trumpet, a red trumpet, my Swarovski Crystal trumpet and I have a blue trumpet.*

*I'm the first and only owner of a Swarovski Crystal trumpet. It has 10,300 Swarovski Crystals and it was something that was created especially for me and I am the only person that has this rare piece of art and it plays amazingly too. I designed it with the teams and it's one-of-a-kind you know no one has it.*

**Please tell us all about your incredible music documentary 'Blow Yo Horn: Making Music in A Man's World'. It sounds incredible!**

*Blow Yo Horn: Making Music in A Man's World' is a visual body of work, a music documentary that focuses on female instrumentalists and women in the entertainment industry. It showcases our profile. I wanted to do something a little different because I couldn't seem to figure out why it is that female musicians were not getting the same level of commercial success as men, including myself. I have charted but I can't seem to get the commercial success. People seem to think we are visual artefacts, so I thought let's just put it on camera! People like to see women play instruments, so let's put it on film. So I profile myself, Brittany Brooks, Britt Lightening who is a rock'n'roll guitarist, Vidie Williams who is a bass player, Brianna Washington (keys) and I tried to capture women from various different backgrounds in music that play an instrument and all nationalities.*

*I've been an artist on my own for over 15/20 years and I wanted to share on camera how we navigate, what it's like as a female musician to navigate through the music industry. You're going to see me navigating through preparing for my next album, being a music educator and most people don't know that I have been a music educator for 22 years. I've written over 30 music curriculums spanning from technique and jazz improvisation, so you're going to see that side of me, conducting the symphonic orchestra and then also preparing to release an album. I wanted to share some other colleagues and their story on what it's like too. So, in the film you will see me going to the stylist, leaving the gym, everything. We talk about ageism and why is the standard of beauty age 20?! We talk about race relations among female musicians, and we also have someone who is a part of the LGBTQ plus community and we talk about how she's been treated wrong because she's a part of that community and sometimes can't get gigs...we go there. But it's not done in a male bashing way.*

*It is done in a way that is simply - this is who we are. Take it or leave it, this is who we are. You are going to see me playing with an all-female group but you will also see what it's like for me to navigate playing with all males in my backing band, which is very different.*

*When did you first become aware of the lack of female instrumentalists? We're guessing you didn't have many female trumpet play role models to aspire to in the beginning?*

*I was actually first inspired by Lee Morgan and Freddie Hubbard. I got a chance to sit in with Freddie Hubbard and I would listen to him and Lee Morgan all day long! It did not hit me, to be honest with you, that there were not a lot of female trumpet players until college. I'd never looked at it as male/female, I was always trained that it is about the music, the music, the music... the music is what comes first so I started really realising it when I got a call to play in an all girl big band and then when I was playing in churches people would make references like 'there's a woman playing the trumpet!' 'A woman playing the trumpet!' Then I started to pay more attention to it. People liked the fact that I'm a girl that played, more than the notes that are coming out of the instrument!*

*You also have a new album coming out with the film, can you tell us about that?*

*I've been working on a new album. We don't have a title for it yet but it's definitely songs that people know and love. I went back and redid Summertime, Summer Madness, When I Fall in Love, With You I'm Born Again..My Funny Valentine.. some really great jazz standards. I put my spin on it, you know, some Pop, Blues, jazz and I integrated some of my tech playing. You're going to get a bit of me singing, a bit of trumpet, and also I produced the whole album and I do play piano so I pretty much did the whole thing.*



PHOTO BY KEITH MAJOR



PHOTO BY KEITH MAJOR

Yes, although you are known as The Trumpet Lady, we saw in a video that you are a multi-instrumentalist – what else do you play?

*I am considered a brass specialist. I play the trombone not as fluently as trumpet, but I can play. I play baritone fluently, I play the Euphonium, French Horn and I am fluent at the piano. Tuba (too)... but I don't like to do a lot of switching because of the sizes of the mouthpieces and once you play a trumpet your mouth is formed to that instrument. I am going to talk about all of this in the documentary.*

This is all so exciting and wonderful!

And as if this is not enough...you are very passionate about the community and education and you run an organisation for young people?

Yes! Lady Trumpet Incorporated is my non-profit and it focuses primarily on

*ringing our little girls into the music community. Those that don't have instruments or support. How can we promote getting these little girls who may come from an underserved community? Instruments and things of that nature and so that's what Lady Trumpet Incorporated is all about.*

This is all so very inspiring! How do you stay so energised and focussed?!

*My faith in God and also my mother. My mother has been my biggest supporter. And to be very transparent, the longer you're in this business - you have a lot of ups and downs – you realise you have to take one day at a time. There are certain things that you cannot control and certain things that you can control. I've learned while doing this film that it is a journey, and I had to allow the course of the film to take its place. The older you get, the more mature you become, you realise everything doesn't have to be done in 24 hours. It can be done the next day, the following day*

you know? If I don't get to that email by 3:00, I can get to it tomorrow. Self-care, you know? Taking care of myself. If I'm not healthy, how can I play a trumpet? So, I have learned to live a balanced life. My music will never go away, and I've learned to appreciate a balanced life. That keeps me grounded.

I have friends that are not in the music industry, and I don't want my whole conversation always on everything in the music industry. I have friends that come over and we just laugh. Most people don't know but I like planting flowers, I love cooking and that keeps me balanced. The gym is where I'm most inspired. Being a trumpet player you need cardio, to work out, so my gym time is my personal time, my self care time.

Music is what I love and what I do and when it is your passion, you do it effortlessly. I learn to not pay attention to social media too much and to just stay in my own lane and work at my own pace. Everything on social media is not real and people falsify a lot of things and that's not who I am. Making the documentary is at the top of my priority, getting this finished. It started out as a short and then I realised there's more to tell so I need to make it into a feature. So, I can't look to the left, I can't look to the right, I have to stay laser focused. I've learned the race is not given to the swift you know? It's the tortoise and the hare. I've learnt to appreciate the journey by being slow and consistent. I'm also very meticulous about my image. I am meticulous about my music. If it's not right, I won't do it. If it doesn't feel right I won't do it.

Some days I'm down, getting this film done and I feel like I've given birth to you know quintuplets! It is an everyday grind. The journey zigzags, you know the turns and twists and sometimes you just wonder am I doing what's right? But my story, it is what it is. What you see is what you get. What you see on social media, that's me, I am being who I am – and this is who we are!



[THE TRUMPET LADY-WEBSITE CLICK HERE](#)

# ENDEA OWENS





# MAKING THE INVISIBLE VISIBLE

It is hard to believe that it has been only six years since Endea Owens graduated from the prestigious Julliard School. Her achievements since that time (and before and during) are significant. She has toured with legends such as Wynton Marsalis, Jennifer Holliday, Diana Ross, Rhonda Ross, Solange, Jon Batiste, Jazzmeia Horn, Dee Dee Bridgewater, was a member of the house band of Stephen Colbert's The Late Show and has won an Emmy, Grammy Award, and a George Foster Peabody Award.

As a composer, her debut album Feel Good Music was released in September 2023, and her monumental composition Ida's Crusade, about the life of journalist, educator and civil rights leader, Ida B. Wells, for the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, was also performed by the NYO Carnegie Hall Orchestra.

To say Endea Owens is a force to be reckoned with is an understatement. Not only as a musician and composer, but as an advocate, a true voice and role model for the people. I have been following her career closely over the past few years and I have been continually astounded and inspired by her work. Her music exemplifies her passion and love for the community and the role she has within that community. A true role model for all to aspire to.

During the pandemic, Endea was deeply affected by the struggles she witnessed all around her. Musicians she knew, losing their jobs, people everywhere without work and unable to cope. It affected us all and we all worked through our own coping mechanisms, but Endea brought some light to the dark times in a hugely significant way. It started with an idea to buy 200 meals from a local restaurant and distribute them and

asking her friend if they could use her dad's car...

*125th St., between Park Ave. and Lexington in Harlem is a very underserved community with unfortunately a lot of addicts, single mothers, pregnant women, just so many homeless people and I said this is exactly where I want to start. So, we spent the whole hour passing out the meals and I started reaching out and handing people money to help pay their rent and bills and everything, and I said OK it was supposed to be a one-time thing but I want to do it every month! I thought, how can I have more people know about this? Let me add some music to it and then I could hire my friends and I could hire people from different boroughs, in different areas to play. I was lucky enough to still work on The Late Show with Stephen Colbert - we did remote recording - but I was one of the few people that was still working.*

*For the first 3 years, it was with my own money - paying the musicians, getting the catering, transportation, back line etc. was all out of pocket. We've fed over 5000 people so far and we've had almost 20 live concerts. Now I'm getting funding from the Charlie Parker Jazz Festival, so the sponsorships are coming in.*

We have all, sadly, witnessed homelessness and reacted in different ways. I spend a lot of time with the homeless community in London and have spent time listening to people's journeys and what life is like in a place where you are often treated disgracefully. The impact of sharing even 5 minutes of your time can be significant, but the majority of people just walk on by. But Endea does not just walk on by. She is changing peoples lives. Defined as an organisation 'that creates inclusive spaces that are ac-

cessible to anyone no matter their race, gender, or background. The Community Cookout strives to make New York a better place through music, activism, and meals.' It is extraordinary. Raised in Detroit, working across the globe but based in New York I asked Endea why she started this initiative in such a specific place.

*I'm starting here because it's something I've seen and witnessed. When people see people who are addicted to drugs or homeless or just struggling, when they walk past those types of people and do the 'don't touch me, don't say anything to me - you're invisible. I wanted to make the invisible visible. Just to give them a gift - someone sees you and someone is believing in you to better your life and you can do this and it's OK, this is only a moment in your life, but you have help and you have people that care.*

Endea released her brilliant debut album *Feel Good Music* in September 2023, which is described as 'a world of soulful melodies and rhythmic dynamism designed to make your heart dance and spirit soar.' Having seen her perform recently at Ronnie Scott's in London, I can say without a doubt, that her performance was incredible, and I have never seen the club exuding so much feel-good energy. Everyone was involved. The audience were singing, dancing, clapping, launching - smiling. It was a truly beautiful thing.

*The whole reason that I named my band The Cookout is really based on the energy felt during the cookouts, when families come together, friends and strangers and we all meet on one accord. We listen to music; we have food and fellowship. When I write, the music is activism, and it is community based - I'm trying to reach people. I'm not just trying to write notes just because, you know? Everything is with intention, so I never wanted the community cookout to be a separate idea, the school of thought is community.*

With an innovative and quickly growing portfolio of work as a composer, I was

interested to see in a recent interview, how Endea spoke of how specifically as a female composer, she felt powerful. I asked her to expand on this and she gave an unsurprisingly empowering response.

*I believe in being a female, doing anything grand, you will feel powerful. Society, when you're a woman, especially if you're, you know a certain skin tone, but let's just keep it to gender, the world can try to minimise you. So, I always believe that it's important to tell your own story and control your own narrative so people don't decide that for you. That's what I meant when I said I feel powerful. I feel powerful, not like I'm controlling everything, but I feel powerful within my own story. Many times, people have tried to write my story or counteract my story or endanger my story, so through that channel I'm able to express myself at such a high level that is uniquely me and authentically me. That is a power that I can tap into myself and hopefully bring to others. So that's what I mean by powerful, it's just telling my story but on my terms.*

Endea not only controls her own narrative so powerfully and inspirationally, she uses her platform to share the stories of other powerful women. The album *Freedom, Justice and Hope* featuring the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis was created in collaboration with social justice activist Bryan Stevenson, and shares recordings of some of the most vital protest songs in jazz history as well as new works, including Endea's composition *Ida's Crusade*, about the life of journalist, educator and civil rights leader, Ida B. Wells.

The first premier was introduced by Angela Bassett - one of the best days of my life - and Ida B Wells is one of my heroes. She was one of the founders of the NAACP and one of the leading journalists in America - especially for writing about lynching's which was unheard of. She was just such a pioneer of all thing's activism, so I was honoured to write her story and tell her story through music.

Endea's connection with Ida B Wells is palpable. At a dangerous time in history, where books are banned and people's stories and experiences are threatened with eradication from schools, sharing the stories of the pioneers that lived, stood and fought before us, is imperative. Endea grew up surrounded by truth. By the age of five, she already knew about Malcom X and was reciting Dr Martin Luther Kings' 'I Have A Dream' speech when she was eight.

*I always knew about Ida B Wells from a kid, thankfully. We were a very, very knowledgeable group of young people. I grew up in Detroit, Michigan, so all of our activists and black American inventors, all the important figures in history, we always knew about. I was having a conversation with Wynton Marsalis before I decided what the piece would be about and he was just discussing all of the monumental women including Florence Price who was an incredible classical composer and we started talking about*

*Ida B Wells a little bit more and I decided I was definitely going to write about her. I don't think a piece has ever been written about her. Her life is so amazing. She started teaching at 16, she was orphaned at 16 and also had to care for siblings but she found a way to teach and to learn and to get her degrees. She sued the railroad company...so many, many things about her... she got people exonerated from prison, she went undercover into the prison... She was really a woman, not only for the people but amongst the people. That's how I try to live my life and so I saw pieces of myself through her story.*

Endea transforms Ida's life into a truly masterful composition.

You can see below:

*In the beginning of the piece there's an open bass solo followed by a call and response in the brass section. The open bass solo signified Ida B Wells voice, like a call for justice and the brass section was the response to justice, like her newsletters and her pamphlets that went across America. The suite also ends with one voice on the piano, playing her last homecoming - I wanted to start it with one singular voice on the instrument and one singular voice at the end. There's four different suites and the first suite is her, kind of upbeat and signifies the start of college, the start of her teaching, everything is going good. Then the second suite is when things are happening and she's learning more about all these lynching's and she sees everything that's just going crazy and haywire in her life. She was born in 1862 before the emancipation, so she was born enslaved but then she experienced reconstruction and then she experienced Jim Crow...so that was supposed to signify all of that. The third suite is kind of fast-paced because one of her friends actually got lynched at a grocery store - he was one of the three people - and that really put a fire in her to spread the word even more. The final suite signifies her homecoming ceremony. I feel like every hero of ours should have a proper homecoming and a proper song for their life. It is grand and it is beautiful, and it just feels like you're really carrying someone's life home, like going up to the heavens.*

Endea Owens is a role model for us all. Her dedication to making the community not only a better place, but an inspired place where food, music and companionship are front and centre is remarkable. I imagine if I spoke to anyone in her Cookout community, they would describe her as some kind of guardian angel. Endea not only wants people to feel seen and heard, she takes action to ensure they are. She truly is an inspiration.

**Interview by Fiona Ross**

**Photography by Victor Castro**

**[ENDEA OWENS](#)**  
**[WEBSITE CLICK HERE](#)**

**[TO FIND OUT MORE](#)**  
**[ABOUT IDA B WELLS](#)**  
**[CLICK HERE](#)**



MADELINE BELL BY MONIKA S JAKUBOWSKA



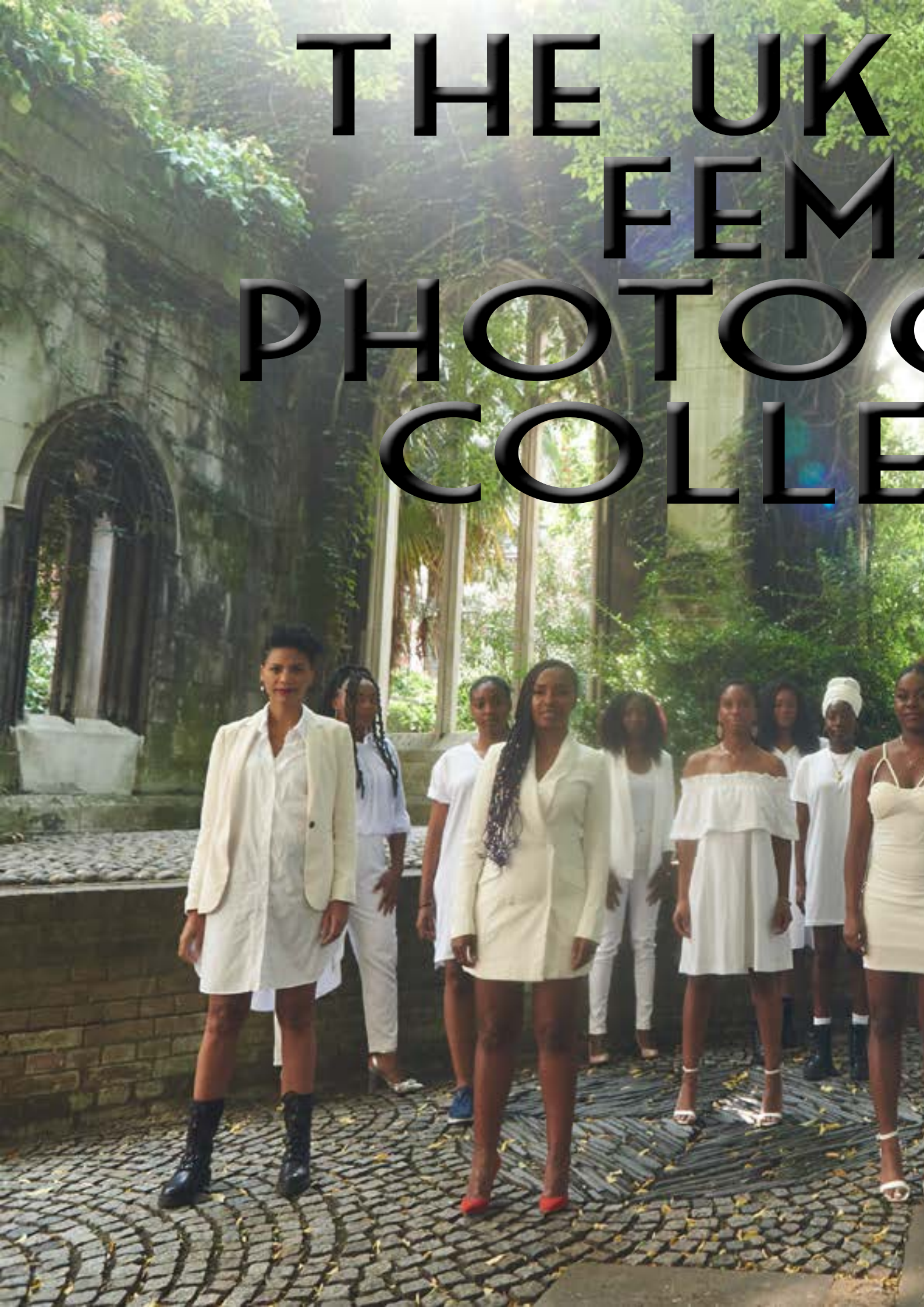
# BEHIND THE LENS

## THE PHOTOGRAPHERS

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

Vuyo Giba  
Monika S Jakubowska  
Tatiana Gorilovsky  
Enid Farber

# THE UK FEM PHOTO COLLE





# BLACK ALE GRAPHY CTIVE



# JEMELLA UKAEGBU & THE UK BLACK FEMALE PHOTOGRAPHERS COMMUNITY

The UK Black Female Photographers Community (UKBFTOG) is an incredible organisation created by Jemella Ukaegbu. Created, initially as a Facebook group, the collective has gone from strength to strength with over 600 photographers, exhibitions across the UK and vitally, it is a safe and motivational place for black female photographers to come together to support each other and achieve. Founder, Jemella Ukaegbu was awarded the AP 'Hero of Photography Award' in 2020, an award created to celebrate and 'recognise people who have done something great within the world of photography for the benefit of others'.

We are so happy to share their incredible work and spoke to Jemella about how it all began and more!

Tell us about your journey into photography?

*I've been a photographer for coming up to 15 years now and I went full time 11 years ago when I graduated from university. I bought my first camera when I was in year eleven and I was documenting leaving school and I've always had a camera on my hip. My Mum had a camcorder, and I was always photographing everything - school trips with my little disposable camera - that was me!*

*Photography's always been a love of mine, but you know when you first leave school you need to make sure you get a job that pays, and I went the into health and social care route and actually found out that I was dyslexic and I felt that university was not something I would pass. But leaving college*

*I wanted to go down the photography route, so I went and did that through a foundation degree in art and design and I did end up going to university and passing with a first class!*

*When I left, I was already doing photography in the sense of always being with my camera, taking all kind of photographs, shooting random jobs and I don't think they were even paid, I was just doing stuff. So, I tried to get jobs, but this was when the new age of digital was coming in where photography was someone on a motorbike and you had to show all this graphics coming off... that's just not me. I've been doing my own photography anyway so I might as well just start my own business! So, I went into being a full timer, as a photographer.*

What was the inspiration behind starting the collective? How did it begin?

*When I was in university, I had a mentor and I would shadow her shoots, she'd take me to conventions and exhibitions and that's when I realised there was no one who looked like me in these spaces. I'd be in these spaces and be thinking, I know black people are creative but where are they?!*

*I did a call out on Twitter first asking where are the black female photographers? Everyone was: I'm here, I'm here, I'm here! Then I posted on Instagram, and everybody was tagging, tagging, tagging away and someone messaged me and said they looked forward to seeing what you got planned...well in my head I didn't have anything planned. I just wanted to find*



*other photographers that I could learn with, grow with, and just help each other out. My friend said, get a notepad, start planning, plan your whole year and that's how it was born!*

*We were having studio meetups, outdoor park meetups, having picnics and playing rounders and we would go off with our cameras and photograph each other. It literally just grew from there.*

**This sounds so incredible!**

*Then Covid hit. I started a WhatsApp group, like a support group to get us through Covid, basically. We had weekly Zooms where we would talk - what's your plan, what's your idea, what's your goal - we're going to help each other get through these goals and plan what you need. We*

*were talking about pricing, websites, ownership, copyright, contracts, all those things to get us prepared for when we leave lockdown and they ended up being 5/6 hour Zoom sessions.*

*Then as we were coming out of it, we were contacted by a black female photographer in Walsall, saying she had this space and it would be really cool to do an exhibition of black female photographers which was exactly what we were wanting to do before Covid, so yes, we are down for it! So, we had our first exhibition there which we did in six weeks - that was people applying, printing, putting up the work, and everyone had put up the work themselves so it was a whole learning curve for everybody. We had over 400 people come and view the exhibition and it was featured on ITV News as well as newspaper articles*



*view the exhibition and it was featured on ITV News as well as newspaper articles and online, so that was really good. There were about 11/12 exhibitors and our youngest exhibitor was 16. It was really fun to give that experience and open that space as people had never exhibited before.*

The power of a collective is so significant, and it has grown so much since then.

*I was awarded the hero of photography award from AP magazine for starting the community and then that exposed us a lot more to the photography industry and companies who wanted to support us and help us grow, so that was really amazing. Being able to get supported and having our meetups filmed etc. meant we could reach more photographers. It was amazing and it connected us with Fuji Film who housed us in the shop in Covent Garden where we had our first London exhibition. We exhibited 51 black female photographers, and it was called 'living the dream'.*

The 'Living The Dream' exhibition ran from March to May 2023, at Fuji Films House of Photography in Covent Garden, as part of their 'Get Inspired' series.

'For centuries women gather to care, defend, and support each other to freely become the best version of themselves. While continuing to strive for fairness and equality UKBF'TOG members also recognise they are their "ancestors' wildest dreams". In Living the Dream, 51 artists present various genres covering topics such as identity and heritage as well as conceptual photography. With the display, the image-makers seek to stimulate next generations and to pay tribute to inspirational women, and supportive men, from past and present. Visitors are invited to enter the gallery space with an open mind envisioning their own dreams whilst engaging with the artists' boldly captured images.'

[You can download the exhibition guide here](#)

At a recent red carpet event for the BAF-TA's an actress stopped and yelled 'Oh My God, there's sister' pointing out one of the collective in the photography press pool. The collective gives so many incredible experiences and opportunities where we are still dominated by white men. We asked Jemella if she thought the majority of her community felt they were working in a safe and healthy and encouraging industry and she said she thought the majority would say no. Jemella shared some of the challenges faced by the black women in her community.

*We get a lot of challenges - people not necessarily taking us seriously. I feel like being women is obviously a major issue and we've had community members going to do jobs and being told 'it's professionals only here'. I feel like when it comes to us being black it is the undertones of racism that gets thrown at us when we are in situations. It's things like being mistaken for somebody else and questions like 'is it true black people just want to be airbrushed?' It's undertones. 'oh, so you live in a house and not a flat so you're not working class?' This all exists. I feel that people just cover it up more. It was funny, we were at a convention the other day when a lady came up to me and said 'I used to work with a black lady! Anytime her hair was you know in the Afro and big, you knew she meant business and she was angry and you knew you would stay away from her, but when her hair was all flowy and stuff you knew that she'd be so nice to you today'. I thought, what am I supposed to say to that?*

*Then we have Black Lives Matter and wondering if advocates and companies are wanting to work with us because they want to work with us, or are they now trying to tick a box? So, we are navigating through that. We also find budget-wise a white photographer is quoted a better price. So, I find it is a mixture. A mixture of being a woman and being a black woman. This is why we have to create a safe space for us to have our conversations.*

*With over 600 women of all ages, experiences and areas of interest, the collective is a truly beautiful community and Jemella is a truly inspirational role model to so many. To end, we asked Jemella, who is also a mother of two small children, how she juggles everything and looks after herself.*

*I feel like being honest with myself and there are times when I don't feel sane... there was a moment in February when both of my girls were sick, back-to-back and I found a point where I was sinking into the dark and I had to recognise that and say, hold on, what's going here? Is this depression? I need to snap out of this, what is going on? What I had to do was remove the pressure from my shoulders. Being organised is amazing and I don't want to get to the end of the week and feel overwhelmed, so I try to stretch things out over that to-do list.*

*There are times when I think I can't do this, but then I consciously remember my why.*

*I just keep going and then someone from the community will message me and says 'because of you I was able to do this', 'because of you I found a friend who helped me do this'... God is clearly telling me things, especially at times of doubts. I know I'm not going to do this forever but what I am going to do is the best I can. I just continue to pray to God for guidance and strength in all directions.*

*I'm enjoying this and it's constant and I just keep remembering my why. I am a photographer. I love documenting my clients and making them exist for generations, especially within the digital world, that's my why. I capture your milestones and I print them to last for generations, and I want your story to be told. UKBF'TOG talk - I want to create a safe space for black women to develop as photographers, to support each other, to support the next generations.*

I want a whole library that is just full of books of black female photographers – I never had that.

*I want a space where a woman has a studio to use, an editing suite where they can edit their work, a meeting room to meet their clients because they don't have that kind of space. I want to do as much as I can for the community. This is me just leaving my footprints.*

Interview by Fiona Ross  
Photography provided by UKBFTOG

UKBTOG  
WEBSITE CLICK HERE









Photography by Vuyo Giba

Boitumelo Pearl Mpebe  
National Youth Jazz Festival, Makhanda,  
South Africa  
Boitumelo Pearl Mpebe: Flute



Photography by Vuyo Giba

Boitumelo Pearl Mpebe

National Youth Jazz Festival, Makhanda,  
South Africa

Boitumelo Pearl Mpebe: Flute and Saxo-  
phone





2014 JAZZ FESTIVAL

ELISE RAND





*Photography by Vuyo Giba*

**Boitumelo Pearl Mpebe  
National Youth Jazz Festival, Makhanda,  
South Africa  
Boitshoko Soulstring: Bass**



Photography by Vuyo Giba

Boitumelo Pearl Mpebe  
National Youth Jazz Festival, Makhanda,  
South Africa  
Boitshoko Soulstring: Bass







# IN CONVERSATION WITH VIDYA

BY ISABEL MARQUEZ

**H**ailing from Sweden, Vidya is an intuitive performer and composer, who tunes in to the processes within her body, mind and soul. For her newest release 'Adi Shakti', Vidya has dug deep into her past and present, exploring her adoptive past as well as the loss of her mother. It is an incredibly moving and emotive record, which tells Vidya's story through eclectic compositions and arrangements.

In conversation with her, we explored these themes in further detail, as well as what she has been up to over the last year since the album's release...

**So how are you doing?**

*I'm fine. I'm starting to slow down a little bit from the past eight months of letting the record out. Now in Sweden, it's Mid-summer, so we had our celebration on Friday. So, this weekend is very slow. Everyone is off from work and on vacation, which is nice.*

**What kind of things have you been up to since the album came out?**

*I have been booking gigs, trying to get the release tour together, and doing interviews like this, for local papers, national papers, abroad papers, and radio shows and podcasts. I mean, it's not every day, but still, since the topic of everything is also quite deep for me, it feels quite full on. And actually, today it's been two years since my Swedish mother passed away. So, this whole time of year, is very emotional. It's a lot to cope with, when you do the interviews, but it's*

*been great. It's been so fun. And music is the best.*

**Can you tell me a bit more about that, the topic that inspired the album, and all of these themes around it?**

*I guess I have to start with the last album, 'The Papillon', which is about the longing, the searching, the finding, and ultimately, the losing of my biological mother. I found her in 2017, I think. And when I became happy about that, she disappeared. I mean, she was gone. And I made this album 'The Papillon', and it came out 2022.*

*Then I found out my mother here in Sweden was sick, with cancer, so I was between thinking: Should I continue or What shall I do? Because we had to take care of her, but everything was quite okay. She was quite well, you know, even if she was sick. I could do the album. And I think it was two months after the album was released, she died. It was very fast.*

*I have been carrying this poem by Rumi, a Persian poet. I have a book with the Rumi poems. I got it when I was working at a book store when I was younger, in my 20s, and I love that book. I love that poem:*

***Beyond ideas of right doing and wrongdoing, there's a field, I'll meet you there.***

*During my life, I've always been looking for a space and place, which was mine. When you are from an adoption background, you are here because someone else has told you, we want you here. So, it was important for me, and always has been important for me to find my own space.*

*And then music started to come from the poem and I had gotten to know the guitarist Rob Luft through my drummer Jon Fält. I was actually in London, when I was doing a little gig after releasing 'The Papillon' when I got the call about playing with Rob. I love when people introduce new things fast. It's like improvisation, and you don't know, what's going to happen. Once I've worked on something a long time, I like to rattle it around and make it less stiff.*

*I didn't know who Rob was and he came to this release concert in Stockholm to play with us. He seemed to really, really like my music. And then I thought, okay, maybe now it's time to ask to co-compose with someone, which I've never done before. Maybe I dare to ask him, maybe he will say yes. I went to London, with this poem inside of me. I got funding and everything began to come together in a flow.*

*We made these two songs, The Field and Desert Blues, on the album and the cooperation was really nice. I was there and I didn't know him that well. And the first thing I said was, okay, this has happened, about my mother. But then I said, 'I have this poem I want to compose from. And this is what I think will happen now with all my music.' It got really still in the room, and he really took in what I said. Then we started to play and The Field came about.*

*I'm familiar with some mantras, since I do yoga, and also teach yoga. With the Adi Shakti mantra, I had made a song and made that song earlier for a yoga class. And I realized these two fits together really well, with the state of mind I'm in and what I want to say. It felt really good to call the album Adi Shakti, I really loved it. Also, I'm Indian origin, it made sense.*

**How did you incorporate that poem? In what ways? Was it musical or was it lyrical? Did you use actual lines from the poem? Was it just a feel of what the poem was about?**

*Oh, good question. All of that, I would say. The song that is called 'The Field' is clearly a line but it wasn't like I decided that, it just came.*

*There's a place I want to go with my lonely heart, with my woman love, to the No More. And the No More for me means a place where there's nothing else going on. That is what I interpret the poems essence to be. And it was really the essence of the poem that made me want to do the album and explore.*

*I think people may think my songs are poetic, but it's more to the point for me. It's quite structured. But then when you put it all together, with the music, and then you start to speak a little bit instead of singing, then it becomes a poem. So, my lonely heart, my woman love. For me, it's two things that I need to express.*

*I'm quite analytic in a way, people don't really think that, they get swept away, maybe by the music. But inside, I really am a person who needs to clarify things in a quite direct way. But the music around it makes it a bit floatier.*

**How would you describe your musical style? What words would you use to describe it?**

*I don't really think about it. It's something I had to think about. Because other people categorize you. For my first album I was reviews for the biggest paper in Sweden. And they were like 'Oh, she sounds like... And this sound is blah, blah, blah.' And I had never even heard of those people. So, I don't really think about that. But what I do think about is that I need to be free. It's really important for me to be free. And I think that improvisation is a way to be free. And that's why I do jazz. But that's because it's jazz*



*people talk about improvisation.*

**Do you use musical features from your Indian heritage? In your music? Do you like to combine?**

*I think it just happens naturally. I don't think about it. Well, what I've been thinking about is, who am I? Where do I come from? I don't have the origin; I'm still exploring and realizing that I'm Indian, in Sweden. I need to mix them in together in a way that makes me comfortable. I guess that's what I'm doing.*

**Do you use any features of Swedish music?**

*I'm a Swedish, cultured person. And I listen to Swedish music. I grew up in Sweden with the Swedish music. And obviously, that affected me in many ways. But I've always been going away from Swedish music, mostly to find something that's mine. I*

*think everything is infused.*

**What was the process like, of producing part of the album? Alongside the composition process?**

*First of all, when I make a song, I do it from a vibration. And that vibration can be evoked by a dream or from something physical. Then I start to sing and the resonance meets with my feelings that need to be out there in the moment. Then I can stay in that place for a long time, singing the same notes or the same phrase, and with that comes some of the other elements: different harmonies, or just a feeling or energy.*

*I introduced the songs to the musicians by sending them an mp3, with me singing and playing on piano. Then that would change of course, but just so that they could grasp it. And then when we get to the studio, we*

*just play the songs through one time, and then we actually record. So, I think some songs are first takes, and most of them are the second takes. And then we don't do anything more, because I want them to be free. I play with them because of that.*

*In the producing any process, we kind of glide into each other. I have some ideas stating how it's going to be, and Rob had some things that he wanted too. But I felt very much that we could do it together, as long as the musicians stick to the vibration, they can go out and do whatever they want. The word I'm looking for is the word of trust. I trust immensely in the universe. That's how I do the producing.*

*And then it all comes together as what the musicians and you have created together.*

**How did recording this album differ to previous albums? What processes did you go through?**

*That's a good question. Because it's a lot that differs. If we take my first album 'Peace Play', it was about love in every single angle. It was things that I had been feeling and thinking up till then. So, it was a huge process, I would say. I actually recorded the songs myself first, and I sent it to a label and they were said, oh, yeah, but it would be nice if we had a band on this. And I was so angry because I thought it was finished. But I got out again, and we put together the band and we did that record.*

*The second album, was a really long process. The songs were not just written in the moment, it was over a long time with the longing, the searching, finding, the losing. We also played the songs many times before we recorded them.*

*I focussed on everything that I hadn't been able to say, like that beyond feeling, which you can't really grasp until you decide to.*

*I actually wrote lyrics in the song booth, and was figuring out how to word these feelings. I kept thinking, this is now, it's going to happen. It's not going to happen. I went home during the lunch and wrote down some things. And I had to really look at the sheet. I wrote it down and I had to dig deep to really go to that core. Sometimes I didn't really understand what I wrote. So, it was a much messier process for me to do this record.*

**And then coming to this album now. Was it a lot smoother? Did you feel because you had Rob there, was there more support there?**

*No, it was a, it was a very smooth process, because these are very skilled musicians. And they are very open. When I asked Rob to compose, it was just like, this is where I need to go.*

*Everything was happening really fast, like in one or two takes and lyrics coming out. But I got the feeling that I when I was doing it, it was quite tough for me to dig and dig, you know, because I had to lead this process forward. I was clear inside what I wanted, but I hadn't been thinking so much. But now I was digging and thinking while playing and doing the record, which was quite exhausting for me to do. One time, I got really angry because I thought they weren't listening to me. And then afterwards, I actually talked to them about what I need for this album or process to be fun. Because at one point, I felt that it was not fun, because I had to dig deep and they didn't really realize that strain for me. I had to take all of that and steer it in the right direction, because otherwise this album wouldn't be what I wanted it to be, which takes a lot of energy.*

*I am a physical person; I need to put my hand on someone and know that they are there. So that's a tool I use. I needed a lot of contact, like direct eye contact so that I can know that we're creating together. Maybe that's a little bit too much. But I that's how I did it.*

**What is the Swedish jazz scene like? What is the scene that you're part of?**

*I think it's a fun scene that I'm involved in. But then again, I choose exactly what I want to do and stay there. I think that maybe I'm not sure how it is for younger people. But I mean, younger people in general are more anxious about things. And you can tell that in music. But in Sweden, there's so many talented musicians and you can almost just call up anyone and say, 'Hey, I like your songs do you want to play?' And they would maybe say yes. There aren't many rules around who to call, then again, I don't go to those people who might say no.*

**Does it feel like a welcoming space to go into?**

*Both I would say. Part of the jazz scene that I am in, is not the whole scene. I would say it is welcoming scene, as there are a lot of organisations and people working really hard to make it an open and healthy, physical, musical and mental jazz scene for all. That is a nice thing. I have no idea how other jazz scenes work, but I know that there are people working in the background to make it a welcoming space and to take care of the musicians, to give them a life of music. It can be difficult to get bookings and gigs, but that's because there are so many incredible musicians and everyone wants to play. In Sweden right now we have a government that is not so fun, and they are cutting down on the cultural sector. Just recently, they took away a lot of funding for musicians, making it a lot harder for us. It is a huge setback for culture.*

**What do you have planned for the rest of this year?**

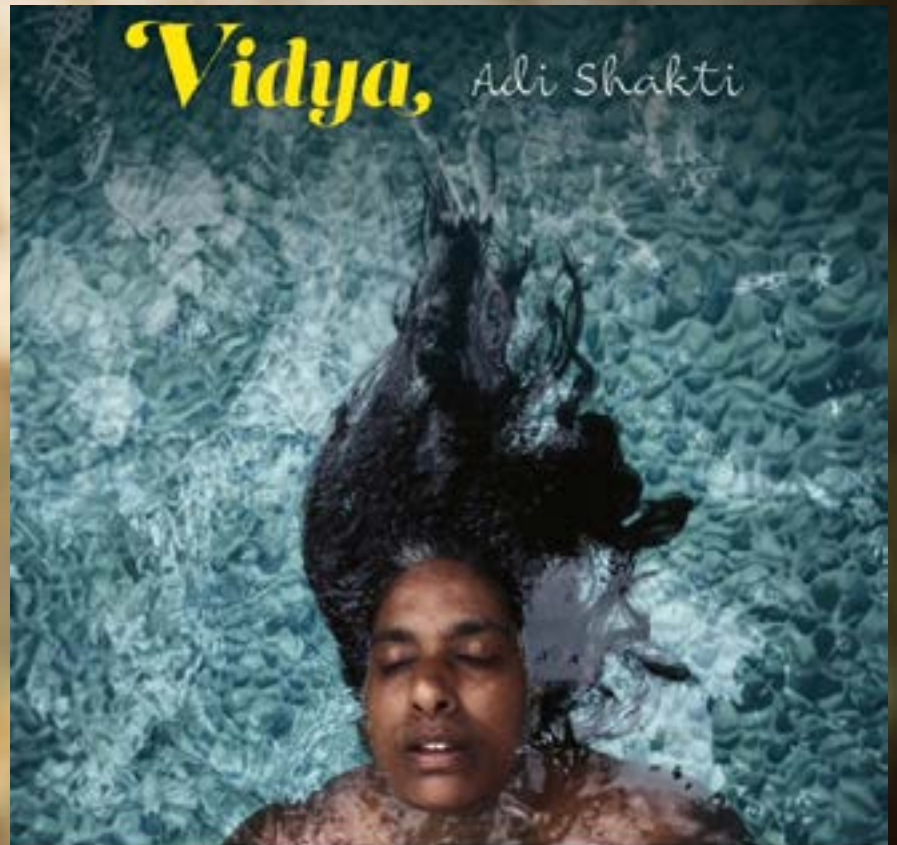
*I am starting up a theatre project this fall, we're currently still working on it. It is about my story, which is really exciting as I have never done anything like this. We will start rehearsing and putting things together this fall. And then I am booking for 2025 with this band, an Adi Shakti tour. I also am starting up a project in India actually, and*

*hopefully we will go with a band over there  
to play.*

## Vidya Website

Photography by:  
Markus Ahlberg  
Magnus Bergström  
Tommy Jonzon  
Linnea Premmert  
Ibrahim Tunc





1. THE SHIP	5:49
2. THE FIELD	6:00
3. WOMAN	5:13
4. DESERT BLUES	4:20
5. MY LITTLE SPROUT	4:45
6. ALLT JAG BER	4:10
7. WOHOO	3:33
8. ADI SHAKTI	6:09

Vidya Vocal and Rhodes • Rob Luft Guitars  
Magnus Bergström Acoustic bass • Jon Falk Drums  
Vidya, Rob, Magnus, Jon and Lisa Bydberg Backing vocals

Recorded 2023 in Gävle at Salt studio

All Music and Lyrics by VIDYA except for track 2 and 4, music by VIDYA and Rob Luft

Produced by VIDYA and Rob Luft • Arranged by VIDYA and Rob Luft

Mixed by Åke Linton • Mastered by Claes Persson • Photo Markus Ahlberg

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PROPHONE SWEDISH JAZZ

PCD338





SA





**ALLY GREENE  
OBE**

PHOTO BY JERMAINE FRANCIS

# "MY HAPPY PLACE"

## INTERVIEW WITH SALLY GREENE

### OBE, OWNER AND PROPRIETOR OF RONNIE SCOTT'S JAZZ CLUB

#### BY KIM CYPHER

I am sitting at home totally captivated, entranced and deeply moved watching Oliver Murray's richly absorbing BBC 4 documentary about Ronnie Scott and his world-famous Ronnie Scott's jazz club for what could be the first or the hundredth time. It never fails to leave me with a feeling of absolute admiration and respect for the British jazz tenor saxophonists Ronnie Scott OBE and Pete King. This time around though, I am watching with heightened emotions, having just performed for the second time at what is quite possibly the most famous jazz club in the world, with a reputation firmly cemented by the roll call of names to have graced the stage there. An absolute dream come true for me to be part of this incredible legacy.

With Ronnie Scott's words ringing in my head, "only an idiot would go into the jazz club business," and 65 years down the line, I wondered what continues to make Ronnie Scott's such a special place and who is now the driving force behind this national institution?

I was delighted to chat with Ronnie Scott's owner and proprietor Sally Greene OBE. Awarded an OBE in 2006 in recognition of her contribution to the arts in Britain, Sally is not only a successful entrepreneur, but is passionate about the arts and is a well-established figure on the arts scene as the founder and supporter of many artistic endeavours.

I wondered how Sally felt taking over such an iconic, prestigious venue from Pete King back in 2005?

Sally - "It was then and remains now a huge responsibility to be the custodians of such an important jazz club."

Kim - What was the club like then?

Sally - "It's fair to say that the venue was in need of some TLC. We took a lot of care and attention in refurbishing the venue in a way that maintained the unique atmosphere of the club through the ages."

Kim - How did you first get interested in jazz?

Sally - "My dad used to bring me to Ronnie Scott's when I was younger. That was my first taste of live jazz - there is nothing quite like it."

Kim - How are things different now to when you initially took over?

Sally - "It took a couple of years to get the right team in place. Once we did that, the club has thrived. You have to book the right bands and hire the right staff."

Kim - It sounds very exciting to be the owner of Ronnie Scott's, but as Ronnie Scott himself highlighted, it is not without challenges. What has been your biggest challenge?

Sally - "Our biggest challenge is always to present the full spectrum of the genre of jazz. Whilst it would be easy to present the music of the 1960s forever, Ronnie Scott's is not a museum, and the genre is very broad."



Kim - It's no secret that things are tough on the live music scene at present. How are you currently finding things at Ronnie's?

Sally - "We are lucky to have a lot of regular customers and members who are very supportive to the club through difficult times."

Kim - For me, Ronnie Scott's has always been an intriguing place, a place that all serious aspiring jazz musicians will have their minds set on. Do you feel a responsibility towards jazz musicians?


Sally - "It is essential to nurture the next generation of musicians, whether that be via our Charitable Foundation or through our nightly programmes - for example the Jazz Jam."

Kim - The Ronnie Scott's Charitable Foundation was launched in 2015, dedicated to the support of jazz and music education in the UK and beyond. Can you tell me more about this?

Sally - "Our aim with the foundation is to make music education accessible to all. We do this through free workshops at the club and through partnering with other charitable organisations who offer initiatives and educational programmes."

Kim - Ronnie Scott's is not just about the great music, it's about the overall experience - the atmosphere, the attentive staff, the ambiance and of course the wonderful food. What's your favourite dish from the Ronnie Scott's menu?

Sally - "I normally just have some chips!"



Kim – How difficult is it to remain true to the Ronnie Scott's name and identity, firmly rooted in its legacy and inspiration from the dimly lit New York jazz venues, whilst keeping things fresh and up to date?

Sally – “Ronnie wanted it to be a club for everyone and I like to think it still is.”

Kim – You have some plans for refurbishment later this year. What can we expect from that?

Sally – “You’ll have to wait and see but be assured we are not changing much in the main room.”

Kim – The infamous bottle of 1964 vintage Mumm Champagne given to Ronnie Scott and Pete King remains behind the bar, a reminder of very different times. Do you ever feel a compulsion to crack this open?

Sally – “No never because that’s what keeps us protected from the gangsters!”

Kim – Can you sum up Ronnie Scott's jazz club in 3 words?

Sally – “My happy place.”

Well, those words “my happy place” certainly ring true for me too and I’m sure for all who visit this wonderful, unique jazz club. It most certainly remains a club for everyone with a really welcoming, positive vibe. Who would have thought a little basement club that opened its doors 65 years ago would still be in existence, let alone enjoying continued success and enduring fame. Pete King himself admitted that the club would have been more successful if he had been a better businessman, but if he had been a better businessman, he would never have started a jazz club in the first place! Thank goodness he and Ronnie did though as there is something extra special about this place, steeped in the rich history of jazz music. It remains a testament to their vision and to the dedication of Sally, the Ronnie Scott's team and all who are part of its legacy.

Ronnie Scott's will always hold a dear place in all our hearts, commanding respect and loyalty. We cannot fail to uphold such a cultural, legendary landmark. Here's to Ronnie Scott's, and to all who are custodians of this wonderful cornerstone of British jazz culture and the jazz scene across the world.

My thanks to Sally for sharing her Ronnie Scott's story with me. I remain totally fascinated and enraptured.



ronnie scott's  
JAZZ CLUB

[Ronnie Scott's website click here](#)

[Sally Greene website click here](#)

Kim Cypher performed at  
Ronnie Scott's recently  
and can you read all  
about it [by clicking here](#)



KIM CYPHER BY MONIKA S JAKUBOWSKA



# JANE CORNWELL



Photo by Colin Miller





LOVE SUPREME FESTIVAL: 5- 7 JULY,  
GLYNDE PLACE, SUSSEX

THE QUEEN IS DEAD, LONG LIVE THE  
QUEEN - CECILE MCLORIN SALVANT  
RULES

REVIEW BY JANE CORNWELL

Dionne Warwick  
by Tatiana Gorilovsky



There was no doubting the Amazonian might of the roll-call of names. **Dionne Warwick**, all 83 glorious years of her, leading a heartfelt singalong of her 1965 smash hit 'What the World Needs Now' - written by Burt Bacharach and Hal David - in ways that had a jam-packed South Downs tent crowd throwing their heads back to holler the words. Funk-soul siren **Chaka Khan**, or if you like '**Chaka Khan, Chaka Khan, Chaka Khan**' ("Is someone calling my name?" she mused as the familiar intro rang out from the main North Downs stage), delivering her favourite anthems between showcasing a slick new line-up of backing dancers whose tight routines bought the septuagenarian, these days a little weary of voice, some resting time.

Singer-songwriter, bassist and producer **Meshell Ndegeocello** gifted us 'Love', the first single from her forthcoming Blue Note album *No More Water*, a homage to writer and civil rights activist **James Baldwin** that traverses jazz, R&B, funk and avant-garde avenues; her quicksilver empathy with her band elevated the music's spiritual leanings, its church-like invocations, even further. Here, too, was our own **Joss Stone**, appearing barefoot for a set of originals and soul-disco classics including Womack and Womack's 'Teardrops' and 'Everybody Dance' (did we ever) and displaying the sort of winning self-confidence that comes with going your own way (this, after all, is the former teenage blues prodigy who pushed back at the 'new Janis Joplin' hype, going on to backpack around the world and found her own independent label).

Twenty-something British neo-soul singer **Olivia Dean** played the first main stage headline slot of her career, armed with a Mercury-nominated debut called *Messy* and seven musicians who knew what they were doing, winning over a young up-for-it audience with her catchy hooks and effervescent charm. Back inside the cavernous South Downs tent - extra-popular across a weekend buffeted by intermittent rain and wind so blustery it saw some smaller stages close until it calmed - there was a classy set by Leicester-raised soul singer **Mahalia**, gifting a set of tunes-come-relationship fables from her current second album, *IRL*.

But the jazziest female acts, and the two best acts of a festival that featured respective stand-out shows from American saxophonist **James Brandon Lewis** and American bassist **Christian McBride** (who popped up in a guest spot with Chaka Khan), were the Japanese pianist and bandleader **Hiromi** with her Sonicwonder quartet and the NYC-based **Cecile McLorin Salvant**, a multi-lingual multihyphenate who performed jazz standards and rare musical discoveries in English, French and Haitian Creole, all while wielding a phenomenal voice whose extensive range vastly outstripped every other vocalist on the entire bill.

Hiromi  
by Tatiana Gorilovsky



**Hiromi**, too, is a league apart: a classically-trained experimentalist whose larger-than-life stage presence comes informed by technical brilliance and anything-goes curiosity. “The piano is an orchestra in itself,” she has declared, and with her Sonicwonder quartet created in-the-pocket grooves from muscular riffs and fragments of ideas, variously standing over the keys like Jerry Lewis, or pounding them a la Thelonious Monk, or working in some Chick Corea funk-fusion. Playing ragtime, swing, whatever she felt like, but keeping things angled to rhythm and joy all the while. Hiromi won a Grammy back in 2011 as part of the Stanley Clarke Band.



**McLorin Salvant** has been nominated for seven Grammys and has won three of them. Acclaimed the best jazz singers of her generation, positioned alongside the likes of Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald and Sarah Vaughan by the New York Times, Salvant got a Grammy nod for her current album *Mélusine*, a French-language gem whose diverse range of songs, some of them her own, others dating back to the 1950s. The project is themed to the European folkloric legend of Mélusine, a woman who becomes invisible on Saturdays; and who, after being spied upon by her lover, turns into a dragon and devours

"My mélusine wanted her privacy, her room of one's own, and that gets betrayed," Salvant told me. "It's this thing of how difficult and contradictory it is to be in a woman's body. It can be uncomfortable. You might want to be invisible. Or you might want to be seen and desired."

Last year Salvant visited the Edinburgh Festival to deliver the UK premier of *Ogresse*, her 13th album, a suite about a lovesick overweight monster who lives in a forest (tagline: She falls in love. She dies). "I am so attracted to, and a bit afraid of, these female monster-archetypes," she said. "The desire for strength and power that I don't have and wish I had."

While also trained in classical music, Salvant values jazz for its long association with race, diversity and radical ideas: "It has a rich feminist history and a rich queer history," says this self-proclaimed "music nerd." Her tastes were shaped by her liberal French/Haitian parents: classical, opera, hip hop, soul, Latin jazz, and more from Europe. Rhythms from the Caribbean and West Africa. Backed by grand piano, double bass and drums, her tunes come shaped by her values; her cover of Bacharach's oh-so-sexist 'Wives and Lovers', for example, is done with irony.

But the highlight of Love Supreme for this reporter was Salvant's spectral take on Kate Bush's 'Running Up That Hill', its notes stretching and floating in pin-drop silence. 'In ...out ...in...out ...' intoned Salvant, growing slower still, even as a band started up noisily on a nearby stage - only to be drowned out by the cheering that erupted from this one.

There were other names that, watched, warrant watching again. British singer-songwriter and guitarist **Rosie Frater-Taylor**, doing her own absorbing thing. The golden, forward-going compositions of London-based saxophonist and Tomorrow's Warriors alumnus **Maddy Coombs**. Chicago rapper **Noname**, refreshingly, overtly political in a line-up of acts that kept their heads below the parapet (while Chaka Khan's participation in a 2012 fund-raiser for Israel's IDF saw Balimaya Project pull out of Meltdown, no such stances were made here). Little Simz-like in her ire, Noname even called out Beyonce and Rihanna for performing at the Super Bowl ("Propaganda for the military complex"). The edge was welcome in an event that can often feel too nice (organisers, take note).

Love, however, was at premium throughout the weekend. Allowances were made for age-worn voices and tents packed too tightly in the wind-and-rain. Transcendent moments abounded, platforming skills that mesmerised and inspired, as all good jazz should do.

[Click here for Jane Cornwell website](#)

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## Cecile McLorin Salvant by Tatiana Gorilovsky









# THE PHOTOGRAPHERS

Tatiana Gorilovsky at Love Supreme,  
2024

Rosie Frater Taylor

**Tatiana Gorilovsky at Love Supreme,  
2024  
Noname**







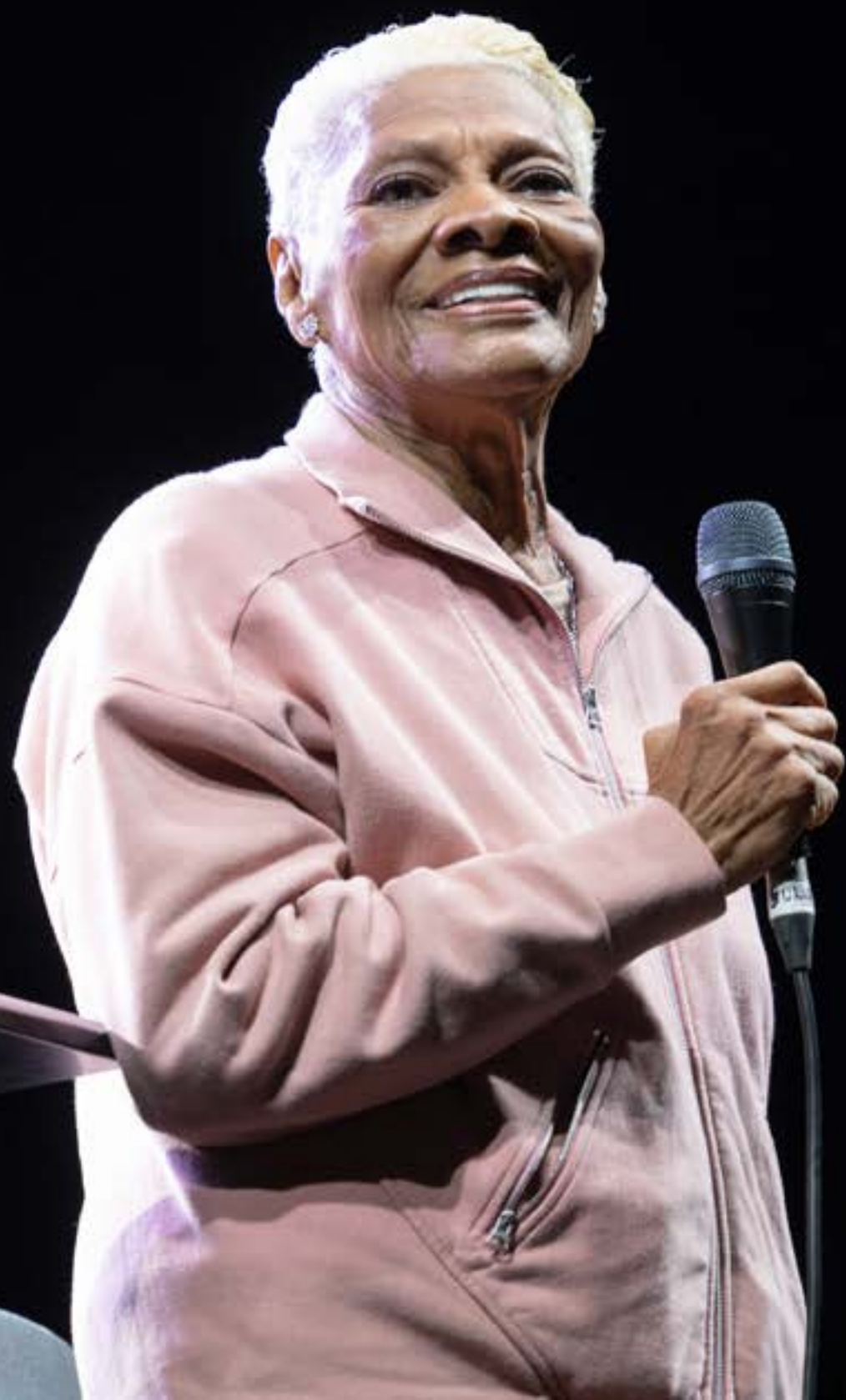


**Tatiana Gorilovsky at Love Supreme,  
2024  
Chaka Kahn**

Tatiana Gorilovsky at Love Supreme,  
2024

Dionne Warwick





# BRIGITTE BEHARA





# BRIGITTE BEHARA: A RESTLESS SPIRIT

BY NICK LEA

Vocalist, lyricist, composer, and sometimes bandleader, Brigitte Behara is renowned as one of the most fiercely creative and original improvising vocalists.

As a musician she is restlessly searching, and pushing herself and her abilities to the maximum. In doing so she has built a slim but impressive discography as leader or in collaborative ensembles, and an equally important role in participating on the recordings and projects of others. As a longtime admirer of the vocalist's work, earlier this year I had the pleasure of meeting Brigitte and hearing her perform live with Kevin Figes Wallpaper Music. Brigitte was most engaging during the gig with her rapport and interaction with Figes's often complex music a real delight, and even more so when we talked after the performance.

"Kevin is a prolific composer" enthuses Brigitte. "We studied together at Guildhall School of Music & Drama and I remember loving his writing then and loved playing with him. But he went to Bristol and we lost touch with each other for 20 years, apart from when I would occasionally visit Bristol with other bands and him coming to London. I was excited when he got in touch to record on his Wallpaper Music I album, and the rest is history! His music is a blend of contemporary classical, jazz, prog rock maybe, I'm not sure. It's very unique. I'm a fan of contemporary classical music and free improv so this was real fun for me. Great also to be able to play with amazing musicians from Bristol! It can all feel a little segregated

otherwise, so I'm thankful that I get to play with great musicians from other scenes too... and yes, Wallpaper Music III will be recorded in January 25!"

One of the most endearing aspects of my conversations with Brigitte is both her modesty and her unstinting praise and support of her fellow musicians. So, I was keen to talk to Brigitte not only about her work with others, but also about her own development as a creative artist. Born in Milan to a Turkish father and Turkish-British mother, Brigitte spent her formative years growing up in France on the Côte d'Azur. "I always loved music from an early age, I devoured classical music especially, and I loved putting tapes and CDs of Chopin, Mozart, Bach together." says Brigitte. "One day I was given 'La Traviata' and became obsessed with it, singing every single line, driving my family crazy. But before then, my dad used to play at the piano occasionally, entertaining us with his raucous voice, and driving some of my family crazy too, but not me. I always loved sitting at the piano after that and tried to sing songs by the Beatles, Elton John and Dire Straits. I was quite obsessive after that with music, even though I didn't properly study it until I came to London."

An aspect that confounds and confuses many is just how to describe Brigitte as a musician and her music that can often be very different from one project or collaboration to the next. This is an aspect of her music that Brigitte herself is very aware of, and something that causes her consternation too, and when I ask her how





she might perceive herself as a creative musician she replies, “That question is too deep for me! I would have to spend so much time thinking about this. I’m a composer and improviser who has chosen the voice as a way of expression in live settings. I don’t like to be categorised, though that is often what happens, because I may have led people to believe that ‘that thing’ is the thing that I do, or journalists have decided to categorise me.

There are also times when someone may have seen me in a certain setting so therefore that’s what I do, and then I end up believing that’s what I do too! I think we are all ‘guilty’ of that, as maybe it’s easier to put things in boxes, it feels safer, we then think we know and understand.” Pausing a little, Brigitte continues “In answer to your question, I think I’m just someone who loves to write music in whatever genre this may come out as, and I love to take risks and improvise with others. As an artist, I also love to interpret other

people’s music and help bring it to life, and give my take on them, through my own experiences or emotions, be it through a jazz standard, Brazilian music or a contemporary piece”. With a wry smile she adds “Over the years I think my music has gradually become freer and more open, but who is to say where it will go next.”

Where next indeed, but perhaps an opportune moment to chart Brigitte’s recorded output to date. An often daunting prospect for any musician, many have told me that they don’t often listen to their previous albums and some positively avoid looking back. Brigitte however was more than happy to discuss her progress and thoughts on the music, which in turn led me to listen afresh to Brigitte’s albums and recent collaborations.

“**Prelude to a Kiss** was recorded for FMR in 2004 and released the following year”, recalls Brigitte, “and is my debut album that was recorded after my time at the

Guildhall School of Music & Drama. The album showcases some arrangements of standards and originals of mine that I think I had written during my time at college. I haven't listened to this in a long time but last time I heard some of it, to me I sounded quite young, which makes sense. I can't believe that I recorded this 20 years ago now!"

Listening to the music on *Prelude to a Kiss* it is immediately apparent that Brigitte Behara is something quite special. Yes, her voice does sound young but there is an assurance and confidence, and listening to her wordless vocals on the opening 'Got No Blues' there is the sense that you are listening to a new voice who is not afraid to take chances and imbue the music with her own musical personality. There is a breathtaking take on Annie Ross's vocalese song 'Twisted' that was originally based on a transcription of a tenor saxophone solo by Wardell Gray from 1949 on a tune of the same name. The song is notoriously difficult to sing, but Brigitte does not hesitate or falter in this compelling duet with bassist Phil Donkin, and in another duo performance gives a delightful rendition of Gershwin's 'I Loves You Porgy'. There is a heart rendering feeling of loneliness in her rendition of 'Love For Sale' and Brigitte's lighter side shines through on a joyous 'Sunlight on Your Face'.

Of the album, Brigitte also notes that "This also marked the start of getting to record with amazing musicians which was such an opportunity and a great incentive to keep pushing myself. Ingrid Laubrock played tenor on the album, and is someone who I would love to reconnect musically with one day. Pianist Barry Green whom I had started playing with from college and never stopped after that, is also on the album among with Phil Donkin who is a monster bass player (who has relocated to Berlin, I hope we get to play again someday!) and George Hart who is an incredible drummer (and also in the band Solstice). And a guest appearance from Anita Wardell, who was my teacher and mentor and is an amazing inspiration to so many of us. This album helped me get started and



a lovely statement of where I was at the time; it also showcases my love for Jazz and Latin standards and shows an interest in original music. I think it was after that that I thought I should write more!”

The follow up album, *Flying Dreams* was released in September 2008 on the Fire imprint, and retained the services of bassist Phil Donkin and drummer George Hart. Piano duties were handed over to Ivo Neame and saxophone replaced by the trumpet and flugelhorn of Joe Ackland. The music feels very different, with Neame’s contribution having a darker hue at the keyboard than Barry Green on the debut album. Just compare the two versions ‘Sunlight on Your Face’ to get an indication of the direction that the music was taking. “This album is a logical step from *Prelude to a Kiss*” agrees Brigitte, “as I focused more on original material here. Again, with a dream band with Ivo Neame on piano this time (Ivo had played for my final recital at Guildhall so we’d been playing for a while by then) and Phil and George again, with the addition of a soulful playing of Joe Ackland. A band made up of friends, these are people at the time that played a lot together, and I think you can hear that and everyone plays great on that album. If memory serves, I remember writing the music for this in my flat in Wapping. I loved it there, but my neighbours not so much!”

Pausing a moment, as if remembering again Brigitte adds, “I had also broken up from a relationship, so I think some of the music reflects that. It was also during a time when I had to appeal for an indefinite leave to remain in the UK (I just had a Turkish passport then, so thought my move to Turkey was imminent), so writing this music was a nice escape at the time. The lyrics I think sound a little earnest at times, but that’s ok, that’s where I was then and I’m ok with that.” An uncertain time for Brigitte that is perhaps reflected in the piece ‘Moving On’ that again features her highly inventive use of wordless vocalising in tantalising interplay with Joe Ackland, and the beautiful ‘May Chill’ brings to the fore the compatibility that Brigitte has with pianists, that is

is further explored in her next recording.

After two recordings featuring a quintet, Brigitte waited five years to record her next album, *Red Skies* for E17 Jazz Records (although there was a collaborative project in the interim, more of which later), and again featured her with a pianist in her most intimate setting to date. “This is one of the very special collaborations with John Turville” Brigitte recalls. “We first played together at The Bell Pub in Walthamstow. We clicked instantly and knew that we’d have a long musical partnership from then on (John is also part of the group Solstice). During that time, we were doing lots of standards gigs so thought we should document these and we did. We also wanted a guest on the album, and we both thought of Bobby Wellins whose saxophone playing is out of this world. Bobby was up for it and so we recorded at the beautiful Artesuono in Italy, with Stefano Armerio capturing our sound and vibe. This was very much a ‘let’s play and see what happens’ approach which I like. Then we gigged as The Red Skies trio, until sadly Bobby passed away. I learned so much from sharing the stage with him and hearing him play, and I think there was a lovely musical chemistry between the three of us. John and I still plan on recording something else together at some point!”

A stunning and intuitive rapport there certainly was, and the two tracks that Wellins plays on are indeed sublime. The opening ‘Dindi’ perfectly captures Antônio Carlos Jobim’s beautiful melody, while ‘A Time For Love’ pitches Turville’s impeccable accompaniment alongside Brigitte’s delicate interpretation of the song and Bobby’s succinct and warm tenor playing. Brigitte sings in French for a gently swinging ‘Les Feuilles mortes’ better known by its English title of ‘Autumn Leaves’ that features a superb scat solo, and an exquisite version of ‘It Might As Well Be Spring’ in an album that was to be the last that would feature predominantly standards.



MSJ PHOTOGRAPHY

The following years would see Brigitte working and recording in collaborative bands in the wonderfully eclectic Babelfish and Solstice. “Babelfish is a collaboration with Barry Green and me and features legends Chris Laurence and Paul Clarvis”, says Brigitte. “We recorded three albums together and played a lot of gigs between 2010 and 2023. Barry and I would write music separately for the band to perform, and then we would choose songs / tunes we love, regardless of whether they were from the jazz, folk, or classical repertoire, and then we would give them the Babelfish treatment, which I think is quite special. A very, very fun band to be part of, and I think that is reflected in the music and performances.”

Fun indeed, and listening carefully to the albums reveals dramatic changes in the music, yet paradoxically are easily identifiable as the work of the same collective group of musicians. Once again, the relationship

between Brigitte and the pianist is something special, and coupled with the spectacularly fluid playing of Chris Laurence and Paul Clarvis the music is suitably grounded yet rhythmically supple. Just check out ‘Sushi Hero’ from *Chasing Rainbows* (2015)!

The next Babelfish album would not materialise until 2019 in the form of *Once Upon A Tide* and finds the subtle use of electronics being introduced and greater use of Brigitte’s vocal effects and vocalising sans words. All in all a radical departure from the previous albums, but also a completely logical and natural progression in the group’s exceptional music and development.

Running in parallel with Babelfish was another collaborative group, Solstice, which Brigitte describes as “a collaboration between the six of us, John Turville, Tori Freestone, Jez Franks, Dave Manington





tween the six of us, John Turville, Tori Freestone, Jez Franks, Dave Manington and George Hart. It started off as a group of friends cooking for each other and having plays. We started playing tunes by other people then once we knew our sound we would start to write for each other. We've recorded two (food related themes) albums so far. I think this band is made up of amazing musicians and the fact that everyone writes for it makes our sound really strong and varied. We've only made two albums so far because we're all busy doing our own things and the one downside of this collaborative project is that it's really hard to get things going when there isn't just one leader, but six!"

Again, what is remarkable is that the only constant in Brigitte's music is that nothing remains the same. It is also becoming apparent just how versatile a musician she is, and able to fit into almost any setting and sounding as if that is the most natural place for her to be. The two Solstice albums come from an entirely different place to the Babelfish recordings, and yet both groups move in unique orbits created by their inhabitants.

With the two Solstice albums, [Alimentation](#) (2016) and [Food For Thought](#) (2021), Brigitte's presence is central to proceedings but never dominating. The group move further towards abstraction and the absence of lyrics with Brigitte's voice working with guitar and saxophone of Jez Franks and Tori Freestone in a heady and beguiling sound world.

With the advent of the two collaborative groups, Brigitte's recording activity seem to become more frequent from 2015 to the present, with Brigitte also finding time to record an intimate duo album with pianist Frank Harrison titled *The Way Home* featuring original music that the most part was penned by the two of them.

An increase in the number of recordings from Brigitte cannot be seen as anything but a positive, and in 2019 she introduced her new group Lucid Dreamers. "Lucid Dreamers is my current band, so not a collaboration even though of course making music

together is so collaborative anyway; but not a collaboration in the sense that I lead the proceedings and write the music for the band" explains Brigitte. "But I don't really want to tell them what to do, as they are so amazing, and we have so much fun improvising together. I might tell them what my concept is, but their interpretation of it is part of the fun. We started off as a trio (voice/tenor/drums) in 2019 as part of the London Jazz festival with our first concert at the QEH, which was a memorable experience, a nice way to have a band world premiere and premiering new work! I had written music specifically for the occasion but as the music developed, I started hearing piano and Alcyona slotted in beautifully, so the first Lucid Dreamers album we recorded as a quartet. This was recorded live and released during the pandemic."

The debut album from Lucid Dreamers released in July 2020 felt like an overriding sense of freedom and discovery. Once again, the music was completely different than anything else that Brigitte had done before, and delving deeper into electronics. There is a real feeling of adventure and the unknown with both albums and the playing of all four musicians is exceptional. In Alcyona Mick, Brigitte has found another pianist with who she seems to have formed an instant connection. "Definitely" says Brigitte immediately agreeing. "This is the first album with the quartet of Alcyona Mick on piano/synth, George Crowley / tenor/clarinet/fx, Tim Giles / drums/fx. I think it was after Dave Manington's album "Challenger Deep" where I started experimenting with pedals and electronics, that I got the urge to keep experimenting with electronics in my own music. I love electronic music so it made sense to finally incorporate some of this in my own work. This quartet helped me get started with these experimentations, and I've always loved the incredible musicianship of these three musicians, so it made sense to me that I should do something with them."

About the name of the group, Brigitte says that “I called the band Lucid Dreamers partly because I feel we create something very ‘dream-like’ and adventurous together, whilst still having some musical awareness and lucidity of where we are going within the music, via possibly choosing to get lost within it! The starting point was ‘Meaning of the Blues’ which is the only standard, but our re-imagining of it. I had been meaning to record this for a while, and wrote what came after as a response to it and of my take on the industrial world that we live in. Nice and cheery stuff it might not be, but I am both a happy and melancholic person, and this is the music that came out of me then, connected to the world that we live in.”

As Brigitte’s interest in electronic music and use of the studio grew with the recording of the Lucid Dreamers album, the country was hit by the pandemic and the interaction with other musicians was put on hold for a seemingly indefinite period of time. A difficult time for many, Brigitte took the opportunity to investigate further the lessons learned from her new group and set about working alone on some music and compositions for a solo project. The results would be released in 2021 as **By The Cobbled Path**, and taking up the story Brigitte says “This is my solo project. I’m very proud of this one, because it’s very different to anything I’ve done before and the only solo recording so far. This album came out of an Arts Council funded application where I decided to research and develop ‘Conversations with Nature’ which culminated into this album. Lots of field recordings and singing with doors and birds and other inanimate objects and living creatures came into play. No one was harmed I promise!” she laughs.

“I often go into this tunnel and eventually come out – and here put together these 35 minutes of music or however long this album is! A lot of it is recorded in real time, possibly due to my limited technical skills (!) but also which I was particularly proud of at the time. All recorded by me from

home, mostly, with some outdoor contributions like my cycle ride captured on my phone. I must mention the amazing Chris Sharkey who mixed and mastered this for me and made it all shine so beautifully.”

The music created for **By The Cobbled Path** is a wholly satisfying piece of musical sculpture with the music carved from the field recordings collected by Brigitte, but as she goes on to elaborate, she was not yet done with the music featured on the recording, and was thinking about the new Lucid Dreamers album, **Blink**. “It was around the same time I was preparing to record with my quartet, as we were just coming out of the pandemic, so I was really excited to play and interact with other musicians, especially after being so solitary with my By the Cobbled Path solo project. I knew some of the tunes I had written for that, I wanted to adapt for the quartet, such as ‘Doors’ and ‘Too Far to Hear my Singing’. But Blink’s other three pieces ‘Blink’, ‘Lullaby’ and ‘Modulo 7’ are very much at the core of the album and are about my grandmother ‘Big Ma’ and my father, as well as referencing the strange passing and perception of time and some unexpected events that occurred in 2020. These pieces couldn’t have been recorded without my Lucid Dreamers and the way they have brought these to life I feel is truly special. We recorded this album in 1 day: 5 written pieces and the rest of the time is us playing some free improv vignettes, which was a lot of fun. Three of these feature on the album, the others I will most probably release digitally at some point on Bandcamp as a little offering, whilst people are waiting for the next album maybe. We are recording our third album in December 2024 and just before that we are playing at Green Note as part of LJJF on 22nd November and the Mac Theatre in Birmingham on 28th November.

Prior to the concerts above and plans to record a new Lucid Dreamers album, there is a new collaboration being unveiled with guitarist Ant Law with a new album being released on the Ubuntu Music label on 16th August. The album titled **Ensnoned** features music and lyrics written by Ant and Brigitte which are bookended by two standards, each

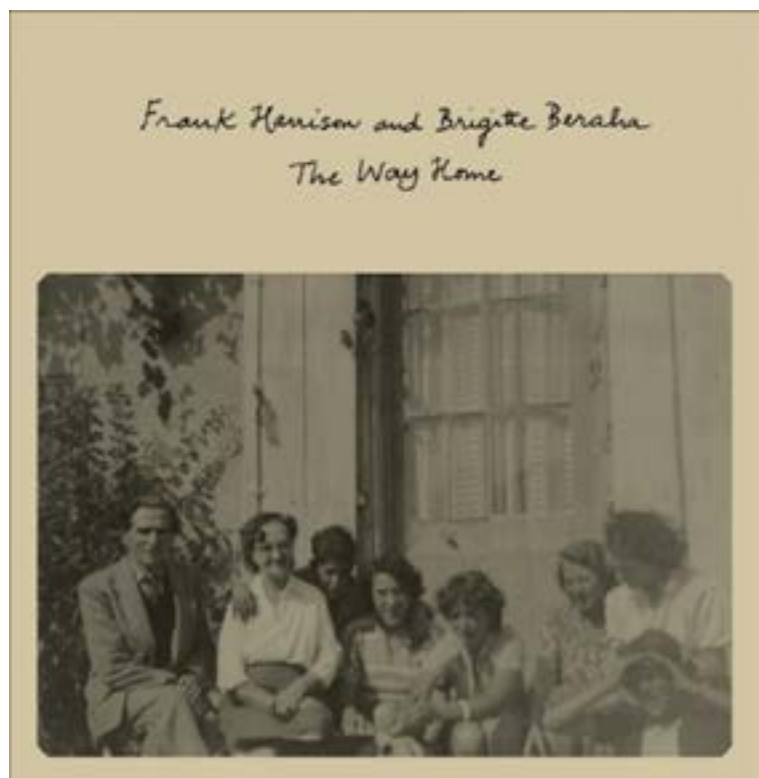
choosing one apiece. With the album having a considerable gestation period, the standards were recorded remotely during the pandemic, with each taking it in turns to lay down the first track on each other's song choice.

An interesting concept that finds Brigitte laying down the vocals for 'A Kiss To Build A Dream On' chosen by Ant because of his love for Louis Armstrong's version of the composition. As Brigitte advises, "I thought it would be nice to sing this freely and see what Ant would add to it" and the results do not disappoint. In return, Brigitte selected Leonard Bernstein's 'Some Other Time' for Ant. The searching feeling that the guitarist brings to the composition suits Brigitte perfectly and she delivers as fine and original a reading of a song that she knew but had never previously sung.

In between are six compositions penned by Ant and Brigitte that vary from sensitive duets that often feature the guitarist on an acoustic steel-strung guitar to tracks that feature percussion, drums, bass, electronics, piano and tenor saxophone courtesy of Adam Kovacs, Ernesto Simpson, Petros Klampanis, Max Luthert, Jamie Murray, Matt Calvert and Duncan Eagles. An album that Brigitte and Ant can be justly proud of, Brigitte simply says "I loved writing lyrics to Ant's beautiful tunes." And for those that can't wait for the album release "There's a pre-launch gig on 19th July at the Pheasantry."

Of the opportunities that she has had to collaborate with other musicians and write lyrics for their compositions Brigitte's modesty again rises to the surface. "I've been really lucky to have the opportunity to collaborate in that way throughout the years, one of these is with Dave Manington's Riff Raff, where I have written many lyrics to Dave's beautiful music. In fact, the third Riff Raff album will be out in February, with more of this type of collaboration! Another important collaboration for me was with Frank Harrison on his

*The Way Home* album, so I am happy to reconnect with Frank and his lyrical playing with a concert at the Ambleside Days Festival in August, and there are plans to record another album which I'm very excited about.



"Another person I've collaborated with recently is Claire Cope, for her latest album with her large ensemble 'Ensemble C', where she asked me to write lyrics for one of her tunes. We are premiering the music live at the Vortex on 11th September. The lyric process when I write for others feels different than when I write for my own music

somehow, a challenge I really enjoy...”

With so many exciting new opportunities arising I ask Brigitte if she has a plan in place for how she would like to develop her music going forward, or does she prefer to keep things more fluid and see what comes along?

Smiling, Brigitte replies “You may have guessed, it’s usually fluid, I treat it in the same way as I treat life, I like going with the flow. What I do know is that I am at my happiest when I allow my music to go and grow in different directions, so that I get to experience different things and keep challenging myself both musically and vocally. For example, a project has come along recently which has led me to write new music which sounds a little more contemporary classical in places, and ‘jazzier’ in others. I quite like the element of surprise and experimenting with new things, to see what comes out and where it might take me next!”

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# TULANI BRIDGEWATER- KOWALSKI

## IN CONVERSATION WITH FIONA ROSS

People often ask me where I find my energy, my motivation, my drive. The answer is simple. I am inspired by the people around me. Role models, leaders, people who are just doing their thing with truth, integrity and compassion. And although the world at times feels like there is a lack of people with those traits, my world, I am very thankful to say, is full of people that keep me going, keep me sane (mostly) and on the right path. Often these people have no idea of the profound reach of their impact – not just on me, but on anyone that is fortunate enough to see. For me, these people have a permanent place in my heart, my mind and my very soul.

These are the women who not only have a seat at the table, they bought the seeds, planted the tree, nurtured its growth, hired a chainsaw and cut the tree down, carried the wood, built the table and invited the right people to sit around it.

Tulani Bridgewater-Kowalski is one of those people. I should also mention that her sister and mother are also those people. Dee Dee Bridgewater, China Moses and Tulani Bridgewater-Kowalski, what a trio. A photo was posted a few months ago with all three of them and I nearly lost my mind. The overwhelming strength, power and beauty in just seeing a photo of those three women together, was really something.

Writer, mother, leader, artist manager, music producer, publisher, author, unicorn, community builder, and as her website says Tulani Bridgewater-Kowalski is ‘wearing more hats than a milliner’. Each of those meticulously crafted stunning hats are powerful, successful, inspirational and full of wisdom, humour, beauty and magic. What Tulani does is important. Essential. Life changing.

I invited Tulani onto my Thoughts, Conversations and To Do Lists podcast and we had such a wonderful, honest, funny and exhilarating conversation. [You can listen by clicking here](#) and if you do, you will feel inspired, you will feel like you are not alone and that you can do anything. With a new book coming out before the end of the year, there is much to explore and share.

So below is a small part of our conversation, with more to come in our next magazine.

Your portfolio of work is staggering. How do you even begin to describe what you do when you are introducing yourself?

*It's funny, I call myself a connector. I am obviously a music manager and I do music production, tour production but I also run the nonprofit that Dee Dee and I co-founded that China collaborates on with us, the wonderful Woodshed Network. I am also a community builder. The Woodshed Networks are communities - all of our touring crew and musicians are a community but I also collaborated on building a woman's space called The Wolfer which sadly is no longer around in its original form, but out of that I created The Writers Room which is a daily writing space for women. I work in a nonprofit space called the Plain Sight Archive which seeks to bring artists who have been overlooked into the forefront as well as archiving their work. So, I connect things. I connect dots between people. I connect people to projects, connect ideas together for people so I'm like a collaborator connector.*

I love that description. I was looking at your amazing writer's group and it's so wonderful. Those spaces that don't and should exist, you have created them. Creating platforms and communities is powerful. I know this is an obvious question, but what led you to do that, to create those spaces? Many would agree they are needed, but not many people actually step up and change the landscape.

*It's interesting because I've always been fascinated with what doesn't exist and the opportunities that are possible in those gaps. We all think a little differently and I have this odd way of seeing what is not, which I know a lot of people also can do, but as a result, I see solutions. My solutions are not always the solution, it's a solution. So I can see solutions, I can see the answers to the 3rd and 4th questions and that kind of led me to it. That's always been how I've lived so when it comes to creating these communities for women, the obvious place to look is to yourself. I remember*

*early on, especially because I grew up overseas and when I came back to the States, I had this kind of odd third culture mentality. I started first with the experience of well, I'm not exactly fish, I'm not exactly fowl and I'm not sure precisely where I fit in but rather than it feeling like a source of discomfort, it felt like an opportunity to not be constricted. I remember when I had my first child and I really needed people. I was on the West Coast and all of my family were thousands of miles away and thought I'm just going to start a parent's group.*

*So that community had over 600 homes and I just started a parents group. I threw parties and had pizza and face painters and so I just thought about all the things that I would want and how it would make me feel if I had those opportunities. I try to give that to people because I feel a great sense of joy doing it, a tremendous amount of accomplishment and satisfaction from giving to other people. I feel like that's how the world survives and improves. So in tiny ways I try to do that and I'm like some kind of a human start-up. I can bring it to a certain point and then sometimes I realise it is bigger than me and it belongs to others, so I'll sometimes turn around and gift those communities or those programmes to other people. I love that and I think that's part of being adventurous. I had a conversation yesterday and someone asked me if I would help them put together some workshops for writers and I thought life is an adventure, why not try! When you try, the worse that happens is you learn something you know? Even if it's just learning about myself and even if it's I am terrible at that, big mistake...*

Yes!! I live by that. What is the worst that could happen? I fail. I learn.

*There is tremendous power in that. I feel like I stared into the void at a really early age and I think that having a lot of tumult and adversity, in some cases, can help focus.*





I think sometimes people underestimate the power of community. I have been reflecting on this a lot lately and something happened the other day that has really stuck with me. I had a meeting and without going into detail, I went with another woman and basically, we challenged something, some inappropriate behaviour. When I came out of the meeting, I could see – feel - that the woman I was with suddenly felt so lifted, so empowered because we had taken a stand. It really hit home for me how standing up and doing something actually inspires you and more importantly others, to do more. All the different communities you work with, the work you do, I know you see that. So how do we share that? That feeling of empowerment?



*I'm glad you got to have that experience; I hope that everyone gets to have those experiences in their life. There's a tremendous strength that comes from not worrying about what other people think. Not in the sense that you shouldn't care but that often what we are actually doing is projecting what we think onto other people. I say this to women I collaborate with in the writers room and from other communities: Number one, when you're pregameing a lot of anxiety and stress, don't do that, you'll wear yourself out before you even begin. You don't really know what other people are thinking therefore you cannot predict what they're actually going to do or say or how they're*

*going to react. Sure, we have a lot of our own personal historical data but I've reacted in ways that have surprised me. I think coming from a place of curiosity and assuming goodness because despite what I think a lot of folks would have us believe, most people are not waking up in the morning and deciding how evil, awful and obstinate can I possibly be to everyone I encounter? How can I impede everyone's personal growth and professional success? People are really not doing that. Well, some people do ...but you can start to shed this extra weight and start to get rid of this fear. I've seen in my life and in others, creatively, professionally, personally, that whenever you're making decisions out of fear, you are limiting yourself. You're limiting the other people around you and so you owe it to yourself to try to pull things back. I'd rather someone comes to a decision days or weeks later and comes from a place of clarity than make a decision that immediately comes from a place of fear or anger.*

*I have gone through a lot of therapy that's helped me personally and professionally and when you're building community you're looking for the need. How can I provide some sort of answer to that question. Most needs are a question, even the most fundamental ones - I need food well, that's a question. How do I ask that question? Who are the best people to collabo-*



*rate with me on this because communities require communities to build them. Even if you're 'doing it alone' you're really not, there's a lifetime of people who contributed to you being who you are and where you are. You keep getting feedback, keep asking that question of yourself and the other people in the community and that's how they grow and evolve in a way that's really serving more than a few.*

*An easy example is the Woodshed Network. It was this big question - where do women in jazz have a community? Where do they get to learn the things that they aren't being taught in an academic setting? How do you provide resources and connections for them? How do we help them understand that it's OK to do what you did, to raise an issue? You are having to go against a lot of social cultural programming and I'm not saying it's anyone's fault, it's just kind of accepted as normal and so anytime you push up against that, it feels wrong. There are millions of paths just as there are billions of people so it's not about right or wrong it's about what does this situation or scenario call for and what is going to be a productive, meaningful path towards achieving that goal. Functional healthy communities are asking questions and trying to provide answers with people who are working in collaboration with mutual respect and the same goal in mind. It's that simple.*

I often have conversations where women feel alone, isolated, where something has happened but they don't know what to do about it and often it's the fear of consequence. Wanting to challenge, but worried that they won't get booked for a gig, or about being labelled as being awkward, the stereotypes and therefore don't do anything. So nothing changes.

*I think that goes back to how can you deliver a message and not come from a place of anger. You and I could say the same exact words verbatim but depending on how it's packaged and the timing in the context of when it's delivered you can*

*have radically different outcomes. I think that sometimes the 'X factor' is recognising that maybe I'm not the best person to deliver that message. I'm not in a setting or contextually this is not the moment to ask that question so that's where trying to be honest with yourself and learn about the people and the communities you're engaging in and not underestimating people's potential for growth. There are a lot of people who are really unaware of their thought processes and their behaviours but if approached in a way that allows you to have a conversation, from a place of curiosity and humanity and mutual respect, you can make a lot more progress. I try not to create barriers where there aren't any and I try to be respectful and mindful. There are also instances where you just can't. Where something has to be addressed and sometimes it's as simple as acknowledging that this is not a great time, you're not in a great headspace so let's collaborate and work out how we can productively address this to the best of our ability to find a solution.*

I think I have seen that you have a book coming out? It's your first book so I can only begin to imagine the experiences and I don't know what it is about so could you tell me about the experience and what the book is about?

*It's functioning on a couple of levels. I wanted to talk about women's experience of not being able to choose themselves, in all ways. Part of that choosing yourself is confronting your past and who you used to be. I think for a lot of people, we are people that other people have moulded us into rather than ourselves. So it's an exploration of that - of course the woman runs a music label because it has to be set in that... At the beginning of the pandemic, and I think you and I have talked about this before, I freaked out because we had all these tours, recording projects and*



*everything stopped. I spent six months unravelling things and my clients were having nervous breakdowns understandably, I was having a nervous breakdown... I thought, and this is a charged word but I think people can relate to it, I feel like a colonised person. There's so much of other people's needs and wants and there's so much of what society's put on me that I don't know what's me and what's external.*

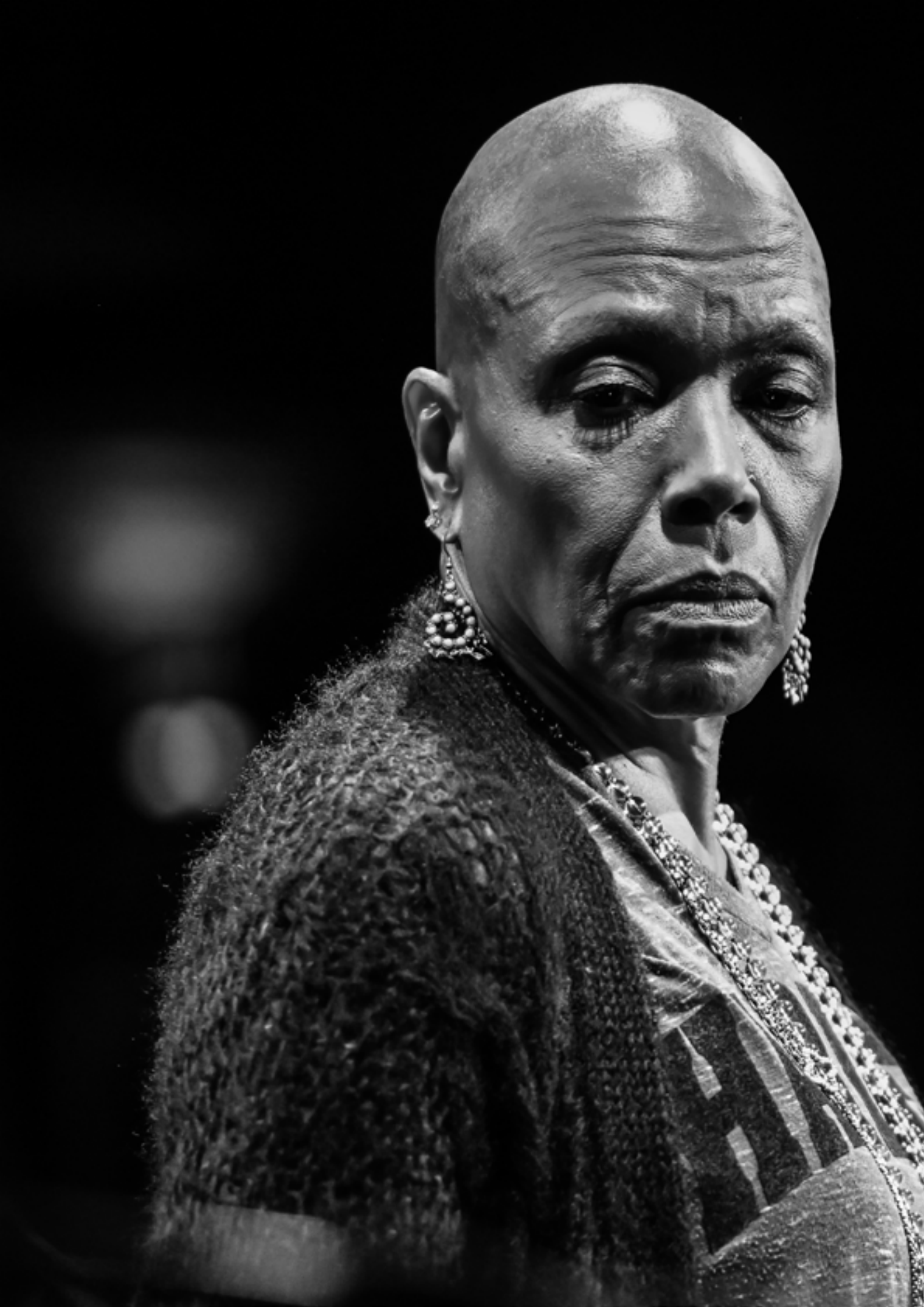
*I Zoomed with my therapist and said I need to decolonise myself. In tandem, my father Cecil Bridgewater, jazz trumpeter, had been continuing on his genealogy exploration and what he found is that my personal history is literally like the colonial slave trade. It's fascinating. There's Dutch, French and West African and Native American and my mother had done her African ancestry and found out about the Fulani - which provides just endless entertainment that I am Tulani of the Fulani - so with all of those things, I am literally the embodiment of colonialism and I also feel like a colonised person from like just the world at large. How does one go through that process? So I had to bring it down to earth and I made it about people. We all play a part in it.*

Photography by [Kimberly M. Wang](#)

[Click here to listen to the whole conversation](#)

[Click here to find out more and support Tulani's inspirational work](#)

[Click here to find out more and support The Woodshed Network](#)



## PHOTOS BY MONIKA S JAKUBOWSKA

Dee Dee Bridgewater. The legendary artist we all know, love, admire and are continually inspired by. I have seen her perform many times and have always been blown away and always expect – and gratefully get - magnificence. She is unquestionably outstanding. Flawless virtuosic vocals, inspired performances, always elegant, always charming and always inspiring. I can happily and easily write about how wonderful she is, but the last performance I attended has left me speechless for months.

Ronnie Scott's, March 11th, the Dee Dee Bridgewater Quartet. This was a masterclass of life. The most powerful performance I have ever experienced. She walked onto the stage angry. Angry about the state of the world, society. Angry that people are still not heard. She has had enough. To hear this - to feel this – from an artist with decades of experience, years of advocacy, a Goodwill Ambassador to the United Nations, founder of The Woodshed Network, ...an artist who has literally spent years tirelessly supporting and fighting for others, was significant. Action is needed and her quartet, an all female band called 'We Exist' and a staggering repertoire of songs of protest and resistance, were her chosen weapons. She told us. We felt it and we were with her.

She sang Strange Fruit.

She told us – showed us - how happy she was that she had fallen in love, in her seventies.

She left us with the feeling that there is inspiration in the commonality of anger and outrage and that we are not alone. She left us feeling – knowing – that we can and must do something. She left us feeling that life can be a beautiful thing if you live it.

My words are not needed. If you were there, then you know. The following stunning images by Monika S Jakubowska capture every emotion, every moment. I didn't think that was possible.

The Dee Dee Bridgewater Quartet  
Dee Dee Bridgewater  
Carmen Staaf: Piano  
Rose Brunello: Bass  
Evita Polodoro: Drums



























PHOTO BY CHRIS DRUKKER



LISA  
RICH

# LISA RICH

## MUSIC THAT BREATHES AND PERSISTS THROUGH LOVE AND SILENCE... 'AS LONG AS YOU'RE LIVING'

BY GERMANA STELLA LA SORZA

Once in a while, it happens that you hear some incredible stories and come across artists that inspire much food for thought. And when this happens, for me it's a gift and we're privileged. Most of all as an artist myself, when another artist shares their journey with me, with all their successes and downfalls, with honesty and pride, I feel incredibly grateful and galvanised.

This is exactly how I felt after having interviewed vocalist Lisa Rich who has just released her new exciting record, 'As long as you're living', which includes tunes by Abbey Lincoln, Jimmy Rowles and Jay Clayton.

Leonard Feather said in The Los Angeles Times, "The complaint has often been lodged that no young jazz singers are coming up to take over from the Fitzgeralds and Vaughans. Every once in a while, a singer such as Lisa Rich will come along and give the lie to this theory."

And with good reason: Lisa boasts an extensive list of accomplishments, from the release of several albums - including a record of Chick Corea tunes that had never been recorded by a vocalist before - to memorable worldwide performances, including concerts in China, India, the Kennedy Centre, NPR, Voice of America and as artist in residence at the Smithsonian Institution. She did all of this while facing health problems that could have changed her career forever - even pausing her from performing and facing pain while singing.

With willpower and resilience, Lisa has put herself out there many times, always succeeding with "...excellence on many levels" (Mark Murphy), while overcoming life's challenges, forced stops and big changes.

'Long as you're living' is her latest comeback...and what a marvellous one it is! Her answers to my questions really nourished my heart so I'm sure you'll enjoy what follows too.

- 'Long as You're Living' has been defined as "the comeback of the year" (Scott Yanow) after you had to take a long break to deal with some health issues. What was the hardest challenge in making the album? How did this change you as an artist?

*The hardest challenge was accepting my physical limitations, especially those affecting my back and voice, which impacted my breathing mechanism. I have to sit while performing now, instead of standing and dancing like I used to. I often feel like I want to jump up and perform the way I once could, but I can't. I found inspiration in Shirley Horn and Ella Fitzgerald, who sang with one leg after diabetes. Mostly, I was inspired by my mentor Jay Clayton! I wanted what she had, and she taught me. She said she couldn't teach jazz, but she did, and .... "it's all over me now. It's like a potion that I can use anytime, by myself or in collaboration." It means I always feel like singing.*



*My two rebounds were different. The first was putting out an old album from 1987 to see if there was interest and if I could get a gig, which I did at the Jazz Church in November 2019. I released the CD in June 2019 and had a couple of concerts and a CD release concert and party in December 2019. Then the pandemic hit, on March 13, 2020, my mom's birthday.*

*First I ordered an exercise bike, then I called my dear friend Jay Clayton, and we finally worked together. She produced my album on October 12-13, 2022. Everything she taught me was inspirational, from her 12 steps, which included listening, doing lines that were ascending or descending, respecting silence, and swinging your eighth notes to her free repertoire which came in handy when I wasn't even looking.*

Your career is full of great accomplishments. What is the one you are most proud of and why?

*I'm most proud of my recent work, the love and collaboration in creating 'Long As You're Living,' and my collaboration with my friends who over the years became the world's leading jazz artists.*

In 1987, you recorded your third album 'Highwire,' after having met Chick Corea, who gave you many of his original songs that had never been recorded by a vocalist, for you to include in this release. Defined by writer Tom Cunniffe as your "most impressive recording" ("Divergent Career Paths" at Jazz History Online), 'Highwire' wasn't released until 2019 because of health problems, marking the beginning of your first comeback. As we mentioned, 'Long as You're Living' is another comeback. How different were these rebounds and in which ways?

*The first comeback in 2019 was releasing 'Highwire' from 1987 and performing again. The second, heading back into the recording studio for the first time in many*



*decades to do 'Long as You're Living,' with these incredible artists. Both comebacks were about persistence, patience, faith, healing, resilience, love, and a deep passion for music.*

You've said before that the songs you've chosen for this release represent your "ultimately positive outlook on life." Can you talk us a little bit more through this concept? What is the tune to which you are most attached?

*For me, it's less about picking songs that will be liked and more about singing with a positive attitude and a deep connection to the material. I have to truly have a relationship with a song.*

*You don't realize you're becoming yourself musically until you take the risk to perform again. It's like walking on a highwire with the hope that you can fly. One night, I had a moment of inspiration where I thought, "What will I sing?" and it turned out to be a rhythmic, drum-like idea I had never considered before. This kind of playful and in-*

*teresting idea becomes a part of the concert experience, reflecting everything you've heard or tuned out over the years.*

*You face it all with yourself, your fear, your faith, your truth, and your soul. What else can you do but tell your story patiently in the best way you can... until you can't?*

*I am deeply humbled by everything that happened during those four days with the amazing musicians and my dearest friend, Jay Clayton. She was my inspiration and confidant, telling me it was my "second time around" as she was on her 80th-year birthday tour. We laughed, talked deeply, and shared our love for music. She sang ten concerts that year and spent time sitting by my bed while I tried to recover from the first day of recording. Tragically, we learned she was ill that Christmas, and her absence has been a massive loss. I feel her presence in my singing and in the way I talk to myself, guided by her humor and wisdom.*

Despite putting your career on hold a few times, your patience, hard work, and determination have paid off, proving that pausing or taking time off from the scene, for whichever reason, doesn't mean being an unsuccessful artist. Nowadays, it seems like artists feel more and more obliged to constantly create content and new "products" - even if this often impacts their health - in order not to "disappear" or for the fear of feeling like a failure and being forgotten. What do you think about this?

*The real failure is the industry's pressure, not the musicians. Creativity shouldn't be rushed. Pausing or taking time off doesn't mean failure; it can lead to deeper, more meaningful artistry. True success is in the love and passion we put into our work.*

Singer and educator Jay Clayton - who co-produced 'Long as You're Living' and to whom you've dedicated the album - helped you find your voice again and encouraged you along the way. Is there anything she taught you or helped you with that you found particularly inspirational?

*Jay Clayton inspired me to find my voice again. Her teachings and support are deeply felt in my singing and self-talk. Her love and wisdom continue to guide me every day.*

As a singer with an extensive career and a wealth of life experience behind you, what lesson or advice would you give to the new generation of young musicians and performers?

*Everything in life becomes part of your music. Embrace the good and bad, let your music breathe, and practice silence. Create authentically and don't rush the process. Above all, let love guide your journey.*

What's on your agenda now after the release of 'Long as You're Living' and what are you looking forward to?

*I'm looking forward to recording again. This album documents a special time with Jay Clayton and amazing musicians. My goal is to keep creating and sharing my music, always with love and gratitude.*



Click on the album cover!

All photos by Chris Drukker

[Click here to visit Lisa Rich website](#)

[Click here to visit Germana Stella La Sorsa website](#)

# THE FEMININE FORCE BEHIND THE MUSIC

BY PAULETTE  
JACKSON

What has prompted me to write on this particular subject, was a discussion around Ms. **Sylvia Moy** (September 15, 1938 – April 15, 2017), Motown Records songwriter and producer behind some of the most iconic hits of the most popular male artists at Motown, like Mr. Stevie Wonder. Who by the way, **Sylvia** was directly responsible for keeping him at Motown after it had been suggested that because of his changing voice (he was signed on as Little Stevie Wonder starting out), he be let go from the Motown label. But it was **Ms. Moy** that pushed to keep him and prompted her to start writing new songs for his changing voice, (“Uptight Everything’s Alright” and “My Cherie Amour”). Ms. Moy wrote/co-wrote most of the hits we still love and listen to today, from The Isley Brothers to Michael Jackson.

The sad part is that to this day a lot of people have never heard of **Sylvia Moy** and she definitely was a major force behind all this great music. Often, we don’t hear about the people behind the scenes, the writers, producers that make magic happen with the start of a pen and paper or a melody that becomes so much greater. We only hear, often-times, about the people up front, that make the melodies and lyrics that were so brilliantly created by others come alive. But if not for music visionaries like Sylvia, there would be nothing to sing or play, right?

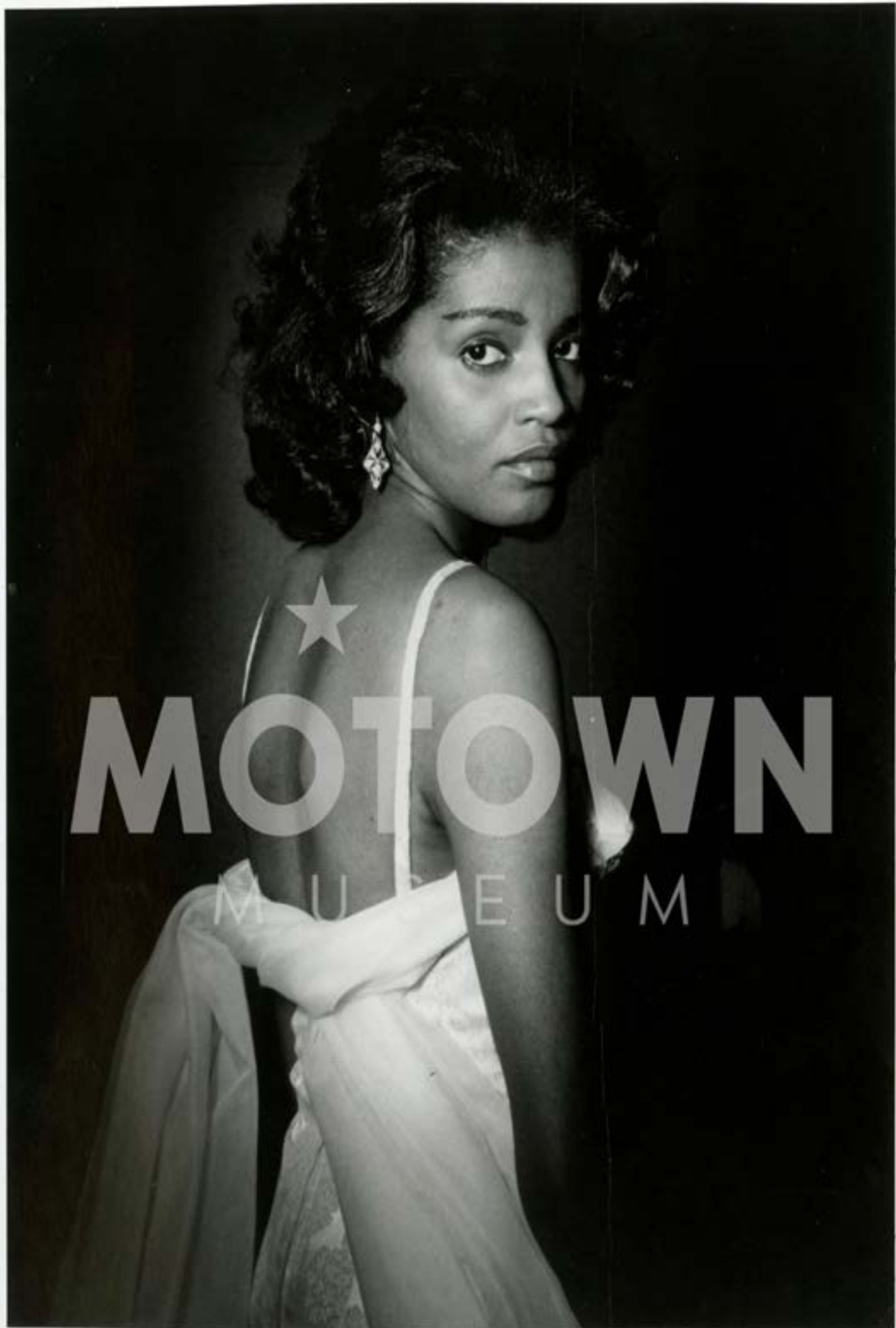
**Sylvia Moy** is not the only feminine force behind some of our favorite tunes but quite often we only hear about the popular ones like Carole Bayer Sager, Carole King, Suzanne DePasse and yes, the legendary Billie Holliday. But there are more amazing women of song out there that have sat at their pianos and spent hours in the studio hearing their works come to life through the voices of men and women alike but who really don’t get the recognition they so greatly deserve. Another female Motown artist, songwriter that I learned about is Raynoma Gordy Singleton (March 8, 1937 – November 11, 2016).

I pay special honor to **Sylvia Moy**, an unsung songwriter and producer who has had an amazing career and penned some of my personal favorite tunes that I still listen to now. They sound just as amazing today as they did back then.

So, when you are listening to one of your favorite songs, keep in mind that there just may be a feminine touch behind every note and lyric.

[Click here for Paulette’ s links](#)





Sylvia Moy - Song Stylist





# LAURA IMPALLOMENI





Photo by Seb Phillpot

# LAURA IMPALLOMENI: METAMORPHOSIS

Jazz is the ultimate music of experience, and composer and trombonist Laura Impallomeni exemplifies this through her artistry and growing portfolio of work. She is fearless.

As a trombonist, composer, psychologist and an employee of Play For Progress, an award winning charity working for young people seeking asylum, Laura's work beautifully connects and interweaves life, love and her ever evolving journey.

Due to the release of her debut album 'Metamorphosis' before the end of the year, and a follow up EP next year, her path to these releases is like no other. Following a freak accident in India where she was struck by lightning, Laura became obsessed with learning music. Fast forward a few years, she has now played at the Royal Albert Hall, The London Jazz Festival and Glastonbury and is leading the way for the rarely seen female trombonists.

Laura has always been creative but creating music was never something she was interested in. A self-proclaimed rebel, Laura is proud of being part of the 90s/00s British dance music culture.

*'The music I listened to was electronic. I was going to raves and being a rebel in the 90s and the 00s. That was the music and culture I was involved in. I feel privileged to have been a part of a chapter of electronic music that many people recognise culturally in terms of anarchy and electronic punk. It was a significant era and that was where I was positioned - drum and bass, jungle, techno.'*

The rebel, changing the status quo, challenging boundaries – all of these influences play a key role in Laura's artistry. The 90s UK rave scene shaped the landscape of electronic music for future generations and Laura is at the forefront of contemporary jazz with the trombone as her chosen weapon.

*'It is in my music... the grit and darkness of that music is very much the end of the spectrum I sit in musically. How much tension can you tolerate...'*

Laura began her musical journey not with the trombone, but with a guitar, visiting beaches in India and living in caves in Spain.

*'After the accident, I just had to learn music. I bought a guitar and travelled to a beach in Gokarna in the South of India. When I arrived, with my guitar, there was a group of five guys all playing guitar around a table. They clocked my guitar and proclaimed 'amazing another guitarist, sit down, have a jam!'. I explained I couldn't play but that I really wanted to learn. One of the guitarists, an absolute legend, loved teaching and took me under his wing and generously taught me. We travelled around India for a couple of months with me constantly requesting lessons from him! I returned to the UK, spent a year working in a therapeutic school, learning guitar obsessively and then decided to move to Spain to study flamenco guitar and Spanish.'*



Photo by Seb Phillpot



Photo by Seb Phillpot

Cave life has been part of Spanish culture for centuries and although their purpose is to provide shelter and protection, in Laura's case, they also provided inspiration.

'I moved to Granada, lived in a cave and studied flamenco guitar for several years. While I was living in this cave, I was given a trombone which sat untouched in my cave for a few years. Then one day I decided to give it a go. I put it together and went outside of my cave to give it a go with my view of the Alhambra and a teach yourself trombone book. Whilst blowing my first notes, a friend happened to walk past. He was a saxophonist in a local reggae band. Excited to see my trombone, he explained that he needed a trombone for the horn section in the band, 'come and play with us'.

Unsurprisingly, Laura, although she had never played the trombone before, went with the flow and agreed to go to one of

their rehearsals. And this was the beginning of her connection with the trombone.

'I didn't have a clue what I was doing! But what it did was allow me to play with other people. Learning flamenco in Andalucía, where everyone plays guitar, was a solo quest. Flamenco is a gendered art form, where men play the guitar and women dance. It wasn't a collaborative experience for me in terms of jamming with others. Whereas as soon as I picked up the trombone, everyone was asking me to play in their bands, because no one else plays it! It gave me something that I didn't even realise I was looking for, which was to play with other people. Guitar was a solitary meditative experience of music, which I love dearly. It is hugely valid and actually what's missing from the trombone because you need accompaniment. But at that point I was hungry to share the co-creation and performance of music with others. I wanted to taste the



the collective experience of playing with other musicians.'

Laura described living in Grenada as 'One of life's beautiful miracles. Cobbled streets, whitewashed houses, snow-capped mountains, and a river flowing through the old town'. There was no shortage of music, with a musician on every corner playing a wide range of styles from Reggae, Flamenco, Gnawa and Jazz, almost everything. Out of the musical community, the jazz musicians stood out to Laura, and this is where jazz, as an art form, really connected with her. 'The jazz musicians could jam on anything. They could speak the language of music, and it didn't matter what the genre was, they could contribute in a meaningful way to all music forms'.

After five years in Granada, living in a cave, Laura was ready for the next chapter in her life and wanted to study jazz and trombone 'properly'.

'I felt like I had reached the end of this beautiful chapter in my cave. The end of this romantic period of living freely but with a slow pace of life. The lifestyle in Granada was very different to London life in terms of productivity and commitment. Its climate, with roasting summers, causes the city's population to be quite transitional. Due to this, it was hard to cultivate depth in creative projects, and I was ready to take the bull by the horns! So I came back to Brighton, which is where I had lived whilst completing my psychology degree.'

Laura flourished in the intimate community of musicians in Brighton where she studied jazz at Chichester college. She stayed for a few years, until things changed. Sadly, her old friend Betsy died, very young, from breast cancer. This significantly changed Laura's trajectory.

'For me, in death I find life. The way we can honour the dead is through fully living and celebrating our lives by following our hearts and dreams. We tend to make decisions out of fear rather than love. In that moment, when

I received the news that Betsy had passed, I looked up at the sky with tears in my eyes and felt this profound clarity that I needed to honour my life and hers by going for my dreams wholeheartedly. If you had no fear, if you weren't afraid of anything - no fear of rejection, of humiliation, failure, poverty - all the things that control us, what would be your heart's biggest desire? For me it was study jazz trombone in depth'

Laura started looking into jazz courses. She contacted the prestigious Trinity Laban Conservatoire. During her audition, she and Simon Purcell (former Head of the Jazz department) landed in a conversation about the importance of psychology and how awareness of our minds, processes and emotions can enhance how we learn and play music. Simon was interested in Laura's degree in psychology (and her being a published psychologist). He offered her a place on the MMus, which she graduated from in 2020 with a distinction. 'It feels like bragging but getting through conservatoire education as an adult learner was one of the most challenging experiences of my life! It literally broke me down, for me to then put myself back together again!'

Trombone is niche, and women are not known to exactly flock to jazz trombone. Melba Liston being arguably the most famous female jazz trombonist, although even she never - and still now - received the platforming, attention and recognition that was deserved.

Laura's journey to jazz came through an unexpected source.

'What got me into the trombone was the reggae band in Granada. The trombone is very present in Jamaican music, in dub, ska, rocksteady etc. I came in at reggae and ska and then found dub which is my favourite genre of Jamaican music. It was listening to dub where I first heard Vin Gordon. He was Bob Marley's trombonist and has recorded a prolific amount of

Jamaican music. When I first heard the sound of his dubbed out trombone, I was like \* \* \* \* that's amazing. I was struck by its deep soulful timbre. That was the moment when I became obsessed with dub trombone and Vin. His improvisations stood out as they are so intricate and jazzy'.

Through her involvement in the Soundsystem scene, Laura ended up having a couple of trombone lessons with Vin Gordon. In her first lesson, thinking it would be dub focused, she was pleasantly surprised when his first question was 'do you know Charlie Parker?'. They spent the lesson talking about bebop. Perhaps this was the beginning of Laura's committed jazz journey and her approach to developing her own unique sound.

Having received a grant from Help Musicians, Laura's new music is set to be recorded shortly and will be released in two parts. The first is planned to be released before the end of the year. The line-up is stunning. Meticulously planned to support and realise Laura's vision. Laura's deep love and training as a psychologist is an integral part of her artistry and jazz allows her the space to share ideas and thoughts where words are not always the right conduit.

'Music offers healing. It's where we can find personal and collective freedom. Music is the language of emotion. You could analyse it through so many lenses, from the therapeutic to the neuroscientific, to the philosophical or the dogmatic, but ultimately music offers a place where we can nonverbally communicate our emotional state and share that experience. This is where psychology and music meet. I can spend my time on my psychology doctorate describing emotion and psyche, or I can play music and invoke and express the feelings of it. Part of my identity as a musician, and a benefit of coming into music as a latecomer, is finding something that academic psychology couldn't provide.

The universally accessible non-verbal expression of emotion.'

Laura's album is highly anticipated and I cannot wait to return with a follow up interview with Laura to explore!

[Click here to follow Laura's work](#)

Photo by Fiona Ross





# A JAZZ PARADOX: MUSINGS FROM NEW YORK

BY ISABEL MARQUEZ



PHOTO BY TATIANA GORILOVSKY



There is no doubt to anyone that New York City is jazz. It is the genre's history, its stylistic development and rebirth for contemporary ears. In the early 1920s, emerging from the musical melting pot of New Orleans, New York became an epicentre for this modern and assuredly Black music; a blueprint of what this genre was and a bellwether of what was yet to come. The jazz genre is to some degree built on a clear narrative: New York City is where the greats thrived and where the most historic recordings and performances were made. The genre's aesthetics, stylistic and musical attributes evolved through the birth of the Harlem Renaissance and the growing popularity of live music in the clubs of Manhattan. From the discovery of Billie Holiday on 'Harlem Swing Street' in 1933, to the naming of the popular club 'Birdland', after the great Charlie Parker ('Yardbird') in 1949, New York has always been the spiritual home of jazz.

And yet, all of my expectations of the modern jazz scene in New York were contradicted by what I experienced, spoke, and read about following my two-month visit earlier this year. I had imagined the scene to be built on a tradition of handing down this music to the next generation, a bustling and encouraging space where musicians would share ideas. The unwelcoming corners of the jazz industry seemed to veer their heads more often than not, with certain traditional performance spaces being monopolised by white men, somewhat excluding many other groups from accessing them. Jazz is still struggling with the same systematic issues it always has, with the music being taken and made popular in the hands of white musicians and club owners, who make the final decision on performance programming. This is not a new concept and has been present in the genre's history since the beginning. But in a modern setting, it becomes all the more difficult to watch Black and female musicians being pushed out of the genre. The paradox in jazz is clear: we're seeing people appropriate another culture's musical style while simul-

taneously doing little to acknowledge the struggles of that culture.

As a result, I observed how women, young people and musicians of colour are being pushed to create their own scene in the surrounding clubs of Brooklyn and Downtown East Manhattan, far from where New York's jazz traditions lie. These clubs are not specifically jazz clubs either, but with the increasing demand of jazz musicians needing a space to perform, there seem to be more 'Jazz Nights' popping up in bars that normally only dedicate slots to electronic or dance music. 'Nublu' is an interesting example of this; the club was opened in 2002 by Swedish-Turkish saxophonist Ilhan Ersahin. The club hosts a combination of events, from jazz to African, South American, Caribbean, electronic and dance music, switching between scheduled performances to club nights. Clubs like these take the progress of jazz into their own hands, allowing it to fuse and develop with other musical styles.

I attended an event at 'Endless Life', a small bar in Brooklyn which hosts games and sports nights, as well as a regular music series. Here I saw bassist and vocalist Devon Gates perform with 12 musicians over the course of the night, all squished into the corner of the bar and yet presenting exciting musical combinations, with classical arrangements, jazz standards and popular music classics. This was such a wonderful night, which proved how young, black, female musicians are using the spaces they have to progress the genre forward.

However, as jazz develops and adjusts to the musical changes of the modern day, through genre fusions and experimentation, the emphasis on jazz purism grows just as quickly. Musicians like Wynton Marsalis who hold a lot of power within the walls of the Jazz at Lincoln Centre, continue to guard against what they see as jazz corruption, in the form of fusion and free jazz, as well as who should be seen on jazz stages. This purist stance has subsequently

influenced what has and has not been programmed in the traditional jazz clubs of New York. There seems to be a continued preservation of jazz's past, which tends to neglect those making clear advancements for jazz's future.

This became all the more evident when going to see a performance at the Jazz at Lincoln Centre, and not seeing a single female musician on the stage; perhaps a hold onto jazz's past as a male-led music.

Saying this, it was very refreshing to see singer and flautist Melanie Charles performing at Blue Note, making it her mission to 'make jazz cool again' through her pop and electronic jazz fusions.

My reason for travelling to New York was to work with WIJO (Women in Jazz Organization), to assist them with their International Women's Day Jam and their WIJO Mentors gigs. The jam event was magical and made an impact on the young female attendees in ways that we could never have imagined. It felt like not only an important night but a much-needed event for many of these musicians. The night featured a house band of Caili O'Doherty on piano, Devon Gates on Bass, and Maria Marmarou on drums. The band played original tunes, as well as music by female jazz legends Geri Allen, Lil' Hardin Armstrong, Shirley Scott, and Carla Bley. After this, we saw an influx of young women signing up to jam; the room was lit up by saxophonists, trumpeters, drummers, pianists, flautists, bassists, and incredible vocalists. Many of the musicians emphasised how they had never been part of an all-female jam before, and how comforting and extraordinary this space was.

It became obvious how different this scene is from the jazz revival occurring in London, a city that has seen a lot of changes in the way we programme and promote young, black, and female musicians. Despite London's own issues, there also seem to be many more educational jazz programmes in place like Tomorrow's Warriors and Jazz Re:refreshed which put prominence on platforming young artists, in turn revitalising the music itself.





Since returning to London and looking further into this comparison between the two cities, there are various New York organisations that I've come across that are fighting the good fight, including Mutual Mentorship for Musicians, The Brooklyn Conservatory Jazz Leaders Fellowship and The Next Jazz Legacy grant. It was unfortunate that I did not discover these programmes sooner but it is certainly encouraging that there are some institutional resources available to those who need them.



Despite the trip not being what I expected, I met so many inspirational musicians working hard to make the scene more welcoming for performers, instead of a tourist trap, making money off of New York's iconic past. It was a magical two months of learning and adapting to what the New York jazz scene has become, and considering what can be done to make it a space for all, not just a few.

[Click here for Isabel Marquez website](#)







PHOTO BY TATIANA GORILOVSKY

On June 27th, we brought together several key voices in the scene to perform fundraiser for Anita Wardell:

## Jazz Sisters- A Celebration of Vocal Jazz.

Anita Wardell was scheduled to perform at Karamel Club in London on this night, however she suffered a stroke in the interval of her most recent gig. As Anita gradually recovers, the jazz community and particularly her fellow friends and vocalists are coming together to pay tribute to her incredible art and presence in the scene, whilst also raising money to help her get back on her feet.

The event was sensational. It was a beautiful night filled with Anita's favorite songs and standards, performed by 5 outstanding vocalists: Vimala Rowe, Lily Dior, Iona Bennett, Diana Torti and Fiona Ross, accompanied by one of the UK's most loved pianists, Wendy Kirkland. Everyone felt the wondrous impact Anita has had and continues to have on the vocal jazz scene, and we hope she recovers quickly to return to what she loves most in this world, singing.

To donate to Anita's fundraiser, [please click here](#)

The following photos are by Tatiana Garilovsky



PHOTOS BY TATIANA GORIOVSKY

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DIANA TORTI

# VIMALA ROWE





# ESTHER BENNETT





# WENDY KIRKLAND







# TINA CARR





# LILY DIOR





ANITA WARDELL

TalentBanq is an exciting and innovative organisation changing the musical landscape across the UK. As a live music agency, they represent a fantastic range of independent artists with over 150 artists currently on their roster from a diverse range of genres. Working with festivals and venues across the UK, including the Isle of Wight Festival, Cambridge Club Festival, St Martin-in-the-Fields, The O2, The View from The Shard, Hard Rock Café, The Jazz Café, The Ned and The Groucho Club, they also run their own Grassroots Music Venue in London, The Camden Chapel. TalentBanq events are always exciting and always, always have great music.

We are thrilled to welcome them as a new partner! We asked CEO - and legend - Ray Jones to recommend a few of their artists for this edition, with more to come in our next magazine!

*At TALENTBANQ we seek to identify, nurture and promote exceptional independent rising musicians. It is an honour to be invited to introduce readers to six artists currently delighting audiences with extraordinary live shows.*



# TalentBanq



Ray Jones introducing Morganway  
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7 time all Ireland Champion on Harp and Banjo – Lisa Canny is a Celtic tsunami of energy and talent. If you get the opportunity, see this incredible lady live.

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LISA CANNY

at Bang

# KATY HURT

Katy records in Canada, lives on The Wirral and has played Glastonbury, The Isle of Wight Festival and Strawberry Field. She really does have unfinished business.

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at Bang

# THE JACKSON LINE



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# HUX



Since moving to London from Australia Hux has sold out several grassroots venues and landed a support slot for Robbie Williams

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# RACHEL CROFT



Rachel is a folk artist who recently exploded into the world of Rock. Selling out in London and York – one to watch in 2025.

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# THE STONE JETS



Astonishing vocal range. These boys from South Africa and receiving standing ovations wherever they play across The UK.

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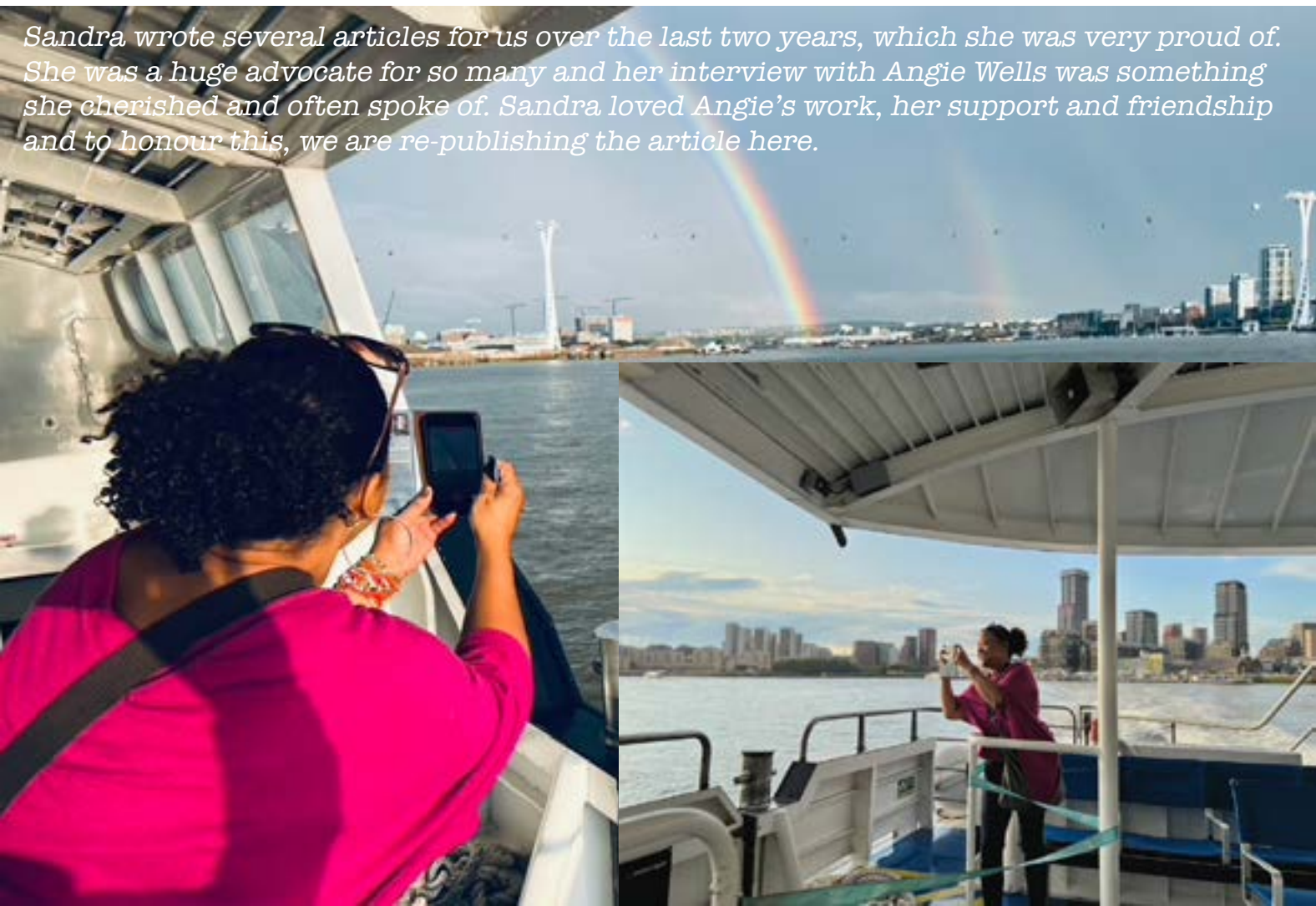
**Singer/songwriter/actress/activist/playwright Sandra Booker lost her battle with cancer and passed away on July 13th. Sandra was a beloved member of our Women in Jazz Media community and a vital part of our work. Our founder Fiona Ross shares her thoughts.**

*I first met Sandra on Facebook, when she commented publicly about the lack of black female artists on one of our guest playlists, saying that 'we are always left out'. I immediately messaged her, we zoomed and not long after that she joined our team.*

*My relationship with Sandra started with one simple truth. I listened. When she told me black women are always left out, I listened. When she told me she was treated disrespectfully, I listened. When she told me, people stopped booking her for gigs because she shared her sexual abuse experience publicly, I listened. When she told me she felt alone and did not have a voice, I listened. She always thanked me for listening and it sadden me deeply every time she did that. This is not something I needed thanking for. This is not something I should be praised for, congratulated for. It is a basic human right – isn't it? Sandra was fierce. Bad behaviour – she called it out. Publicly. That might not be everyone's way, but it was Sandra's way. And if you didn't understand why she was calling something out she would open the dialogue both publicly and privately to explain. That takes a level of courage and strength that few have.*

*Sandra stayed with me for two weeks last year on a trip to London. She met with some of the women in the team, we went on a boat trip where we saw a double rainbow and we went foraging in the woods for elderberries so she could make a herbal remedy for her cancer. She sang for my elderly neighbour who was absolutely captivated, despite his dementia. We ranted, we cried, we laughed and we listened to jazz. Sandra made me a better person and she will be in my heart and mind forever.*

*Sandra wrote several articles for us over the last two years, which she was very proud of. She was a huge advocate for so many and her interview with Angie Wells was something she cherished and often spoke of. Sandra loved Angie's work, her support and friendship and to honour this, we are re-publishing the article here.*







# THE ARTIST SPOTLIGHT: ANGIE WELLS BY SANDRA BOOKER

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

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

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

**SB What was it like for you?**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# ANGIE WELLS

## TRUTH BE TOLD



**SB:** Where did you attend college?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

inspired me to create a musical gumbo.

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[Click here to visit Sandra Booker website](#)



# THE PHOTOGRAPH

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at the Saratoga Ja



Samara Joy

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Barber  
Jazz Festival, 2024



Laufey

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Norah Jones



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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!

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# ON THE BOOKCASE



The Women In Jazz Media bookcase is all about platforming female authors from across the world. With almost 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

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# Go For It

*Surviving the Challenges of Becoming an Artist*

NORA GERMAIN

# i GOT THUNDER BLACK WOMEN SONGWRITERS ON THEIR CRAFT

Edited by LaShonda Katrice Barnett

DARA KHAN • DONNE WARREN • JEAN ARMATRADING • DOTY • TRAMANE HARRIS • OLETA ADAMS

Alexis McGee

# From Blues to Beyoncé

A Century of  
Black Women's  
Generational  
Sonic Rhetorics

# PO D E R O S A S

CONVERSATIONS WITH  
EXTRAORDINARY  
ORDINARY WOMEN



Lisette García, Ph.D.  
With Barrett Martin



ON THE  
Women in  
Jazz Media  
PLAYLIST



CHINA MOSES BY MONIKA S JAKUBOWSKA

# BRAD STONE

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

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

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

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ARTIST!**

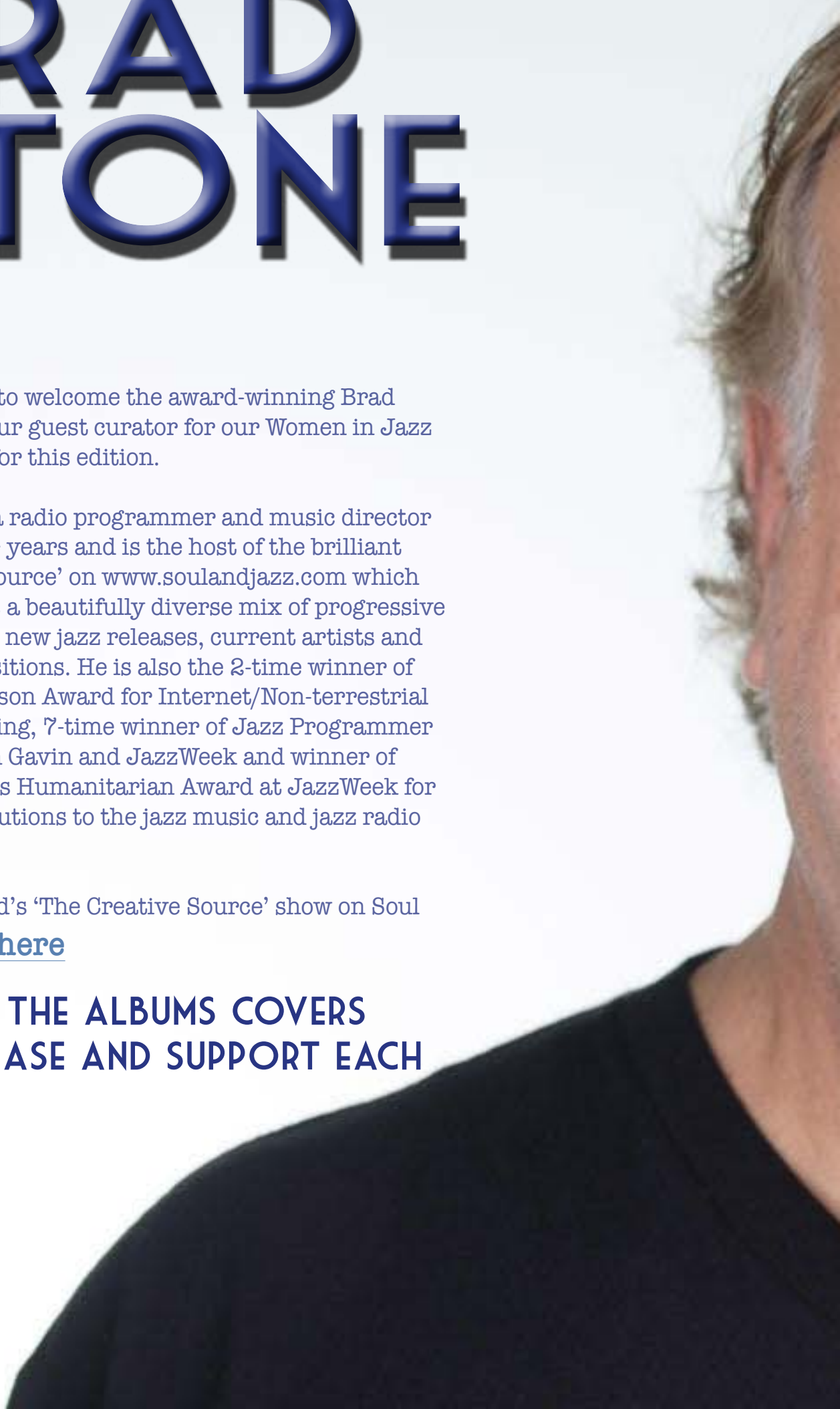




PHOTO COURTESY OF JAZZ CONNECT

PHOTOS BY DESMOND WHITE

APRIL BY





APRIL VARNER

CELLAR



# APRIL VARNER



April Varner  
"April"  
Cellar Music - 2024

Vocalist April Varner came up with a clever idea for this album, which might seem a bit of a gimmick at first. All of the songs included have her first name "April" in the title. But, she effectively pulls this off, with considerable flair and aplomb. Produced by the notable drummer, educator and author Ulysses Owens, Jr., this record effectively reveals her talent handling different tempos and musical situations, showcasing her deft abilities in phrasing at such an early age. She also composed a number of the tracks on this album. I look forward already to her next release – I am wondering what direction she will go in?!

# SEULAH NOH



PHOTO BY TAE-HWAN KIM



**Seulah Noh (Jazz Orchestra)  
“Nohmad”  
Seulah Noh - 2023**

Among the rich abundance of new recordings featuring compositions for large ensembles/jazz orchestras, this release notably stands out for me. South Korean pianist has composed this wonderful work for her first record release. All the compositions are hers, notably including a beautiful suite (“Traveler’s Suite” in 3 parts) – with the exception of two tracks, compositions by Pat Metheny and Fred Hersch. Please seek out this recording on your favorite format/platform – let’s support young composers like Ms. Noh!

# JO HARROP



PHOTO BY MONIKA S JAKUBOWSKA



Jo Harrop  
“The Path of a Tear”  
Lateralize Records – 2024

Many of our British readers will no strangers to vocalist Jo Harrop. The London-based Harrop traveled to Los Angeles to record this record with notable producer Larry Klein (who chips in on bass on 2 tracks). I love her repertoire on this album, with songs written by Leonard Cohen, Steve Earle, and Leon Russell – and most significantly 8 originals.

A great group of L.A. based musicians appear, including Jim Cox on keyboards, Anthony Wilson on Guitar, bassist David Piltch and Victor Indrizzo on drums and percussion.

Her sultry composition “A Love Like This” and soulful treatment of Leonard Cohen’s “Traveling Light” are worth the cost of admission alone.



# MARIAH PARKER



WINDOWS THROUGH TIME

**MARIAH  
PARKER**

• INDO  
• LATIN  
• JAZZ  
ENSEMBLE



PHOTO BY ROSS PELTON

A photograph of a woman playing a black grand piano. The piano is positioned in front of a large window that looks out onto a lush green landscape. The woman's right hand is visible, resting on the keys. The piano has a CD player integrated into its base. The text is overlaid on the upper portion of the image.

**Mariah Parker (Indo Latin Jazz Ensemble)**  
**“Windows Through Time”**  
**Ancient-Future.com Records – 2024**

North of San Francisco in California lie Marin and Sonoma Counties, home to a number of musicians somewhat separate from the San Francisco Bay Area musical scene. Mariah Parker lives in Sonoma County, and she has included many wonderful musicians who happen to live locally on this project, as part of her Indo Latin Jazz Ensemble. The label refers to this project at “World Jazz”, and I think that is quite descript. If you’re a fan of world fusion music, I highly encourage you to pick up a copy of this album – superb musicianship, compelling compositions by Mariah, beautifully recorded, this album has been a staple on my radio program, “The Creative Source”, of late. You must check out the title track with the incredible voice of Claudia Villela, and the saxophone of Paul McCandless.

# MELISSA ALDANA







**Melissa Aldana**  
**“Echoes of the Inner Prophet”**  
**Blue Note – 2024**

Originally from Santiago, Chile, and now residing in New York City, tenor saxophonist Melissa Aldana broke on the scene at a young age already wielding impressive chops. With “Echoes of the Inner Prophet”, already her 7th album as a leader (I believe I’ve counted correctly!) at the still young age of 35, she evinces an advanced level of maturity that belies her age. With nods to heroes such as the masters Shorter, Lloyd and Rollins – she is poised to be regarded as one of the masters in her (and our) future. A remarkable step forward in her artistic development.

**PHOTO BY ALAN BRESSON**

# JIHEE HEO

**Jihee Heo**

**“Flow”**

**OA2 Records – 2024**

On this recording, South Korean born and raised pianist Jihee Heo has an opportunity to really shine. After studying in Amsterdam, she settled into living and studying in New York, and is now a part of that jazz scene. This album, masterfully recorded by Maureen Sickler at the Van Gelder Studios in New Jersey, is principally a piano trio date, with Alexander Claffy on bass and Joe Farnsworth on drums – a superb rhythm section. Master alto saxophonist Vincent Herring also joins on two numbers. All but 2 of the 8 tracks on this album are compositions by Ms. Heo. She exhibits her considerable technique and advanced harmonic knowledge on these compositions. The album was recently released on Seattle’s wonderful OA2 Records, an imprint of the Origin Records label group.





PHOTO BY DREW BORDEAUX



**Iris Trio**  
**“Project Earth: The Blue Chapter”**  
**Centrediscs – 2024**

At the intersection of jazz and classical music, we have this spectacularly beautiful release “Project Earth: The Blue Chapter”. Performed by clarinetist Christine Carter, pianist Anna Petrova and Anna Petrova on viola – the recording consists of 3 separate suites. Composed by the German-born, now Canada-residing pianist Florian Hoefner, the trio bring his works to light with precision and depth. Some poetry is interspersed, read by Don McKay. This is work that deserves to be heard!

PHOTO BY JOE CHASE

# IRIS TRIO



PROJECT EARTH  
THE BLUE CHAPTER

IRIS  
TRIO





PHOTO BY NOE CUGNY

# AMINA FIGAROVA

**Amina Figarova (and the Matsiko World Orphan Choir)  
“Suite for Africa”  
AmFi Records – 2024**

Well, Azerbaijani native and New York mainstay Amina Figarova is at it again! Each time the pianist and composer releases a new album, I say “it’s her (their) best one yet!” I’ve been saying it again about this one, as I’ve been playing track after track on the air. Accompanied by her longtime wonderful sextet (Bart Platteau, flute; Wayne Escoffery, tenor; Alex Pope Norris, trumpet; Yashushi Nakamura, bass; Rudy Royston, drums), they have also recorded this time with a wonderful children’s choir from South Africa. It sounds as if the entire band was energized and inspired by this collaboration.

# IDIT SHNER

**Idit Shner (& Mhondoro)  
“Ngatibatanei (Let Us Unite!)”  
OA2 Records – 2024**

One of two stellar alto saxophonists included this month, perhaps her name is not as recognizable as the other. She is Professor of Music at the University of Oregon in Eugene, OR here in the U.S., so not immersed in one of the big “jazz scene” cities. However, her prodigious alto saxophone playing needs to be discovered by a wider audience! This is the second record released by her collective Mhondoro. During the pandemic, she discovered that several of her neighbors were musicians, including Zimbabwean percussionist John Mambira – and they realized that they had common interests in jazz composed with a global approach. One of my favorite releases of 2024 thus far – check them out!







**IDIT  
SHNER**

Torrey Newhart  
Garrett Baxter  
Ken Mastrogiovanni

LIVE  
AT THE  
JAZZ  
STATION

PHOTO BY LISA HAGEN GLYNN

# LAKECIA BENJAMIN

Lakecia Benjamin  
“Phoenix Reimagined - Live”  
Ropeadope – 2024

Alto saxophonist Lakecia Benjamin released an album last year (2023), “Phoenix” to much acclaim, and was one of the most played albums on jazz radio in the U.S. that year. Her prodigious technique and dexterous playing has gained her a reputation as one of the top young alto players in the world – she is in total control of her horn! She has experienced a surge in popularity of late, having recently appeared alongside the band of late night talk show host Stephen Colbert (you can easily find the YouTube clips of “The Late Show”). This new release contains some live versions of songs from the “Phoenix” album, as well as some new material. She and her “A list” band are on fire!





PHOTO BY *Tatiana Gorilovsky*  
PHOTOGRAPHY

# ALEXIS COLE





Alexis Cole (and the Taipei Jazz Orchestra)  
“Jazz Republic”  
Tiger Turn – 2024

I've had the great pleasure of watching (and hearing!) the development of Alexis Cole as a jazz singer over the past 20+ years. At a young age she exhibit significant talent and promise. Her new release is a fine example of the maturity that she has grown into in her profession.

Possessing a beautiful tone, perfect intonation, great phrasing and an ability to scat – it is an absolute pleasure to listen to her showcase her craft. A wonderful collaboration with this young orchestra from Taiwan.

PHOTO BY NOLAN REGENT



**Nicole Glover**  
**“Plays”**  
**Savant – 2024**

Tenor saxophonist Nicole Glover is all over the place in New York City these days. I had the good fortune to see her with guitarist Will Bernard’s Quartet (Ben Allison on bass and Allison Miller on drums) at Small’s when I was in NY in January. This recording of her as a leader gives her a real showcase of why she is in such demand. 5 of the 8 tracks are recorded as a trio format (sax, bass, drums), giving Nicole a chance to do it all: play the melody, outline the harmonic changes and solo practically in the same breath. Vibraphonist Steve Nelson joins on 3 tracks, but never gets in the way of Nicole’s seamless playing. She is a ‘force of nature’!



PHOTOS BY EBRO YILDIZ



**LIMINAL  
SILENCE**

Sunny Kim  
Vardan Ovsepien  
Ben Monder



**Sunny Kim (with Vardan Ovsepien and Ben  
Mondar)  
“Liminal Silence”  
Earshift Music – 2023**

Ethereal. Meditative. Ambient. Contemplative. Shimmering. So many adjectives come to mind in listening to vocalist Sunny Kim’s stunning release “Liminal Silence”. Created with partners in crime Vardan Ovsepien on piano and keys, and Ben Monder on guitar (both well known for their work in the jazz arena), as well as other guests – they create an aural soundscape that is both beautiful and haunting. Kim’s electronic processing adds to the magic. Highly recommended for late night listening, with a glass of wine or a nice cup of tea!



# SUNNY KIM



PHOTOS BY SUNG HYUN SOHN

# WOMEN IN JAZZ IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

## MORE THAN A FEW OF US

Inspired by Willard Jenkins book 'Ain't But A Few of Us', the Women in Jazz Media's new mentoring scheme **More Than A Few of Us** is open for applicants!

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

**More Than A Few of Us** is open for applicants!

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

**#knockingdownthedoors**

**BLACK  
LIVES IN  
MUSIC**

# JAZZ MEDIA

## BLACK LIVES IN MUSIC



PHOTO OF CAMILLA GEORGE BY MONIKA S JAKUBOWSKA

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EVELYN GLENNIE



PHOTO BY MONIKA S JAKUBOWSKA