

WOMEN IN JAZZ MEDIA

THE MAGAZINE



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Dr Alexis McGee
Emily Remler
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Sylvia Cuenca
Tamara Barschak
Tatiana Gorilovsky
Youn Sun Nah

and so much more!

DEC 2024

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

Nick Lea, Guy Fonck, Jane Cornwell, Jordannah Elizabeth, Mike Cypher, and a special shout out to Dr Bradley Stone who is fast becoming an honorary member of the team!

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PHOTO OF EVITA POLIDORO BY MONIKA S JAKUBOWSKA

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

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 not only welcomed but valued. The dream is that eventually Women in Jazz Media does not need to exist and that all women are given the same opportunities as everyone else, respected and treated equally. Sadly, we have a way to go. There are many conversations that happen behind the scenes, discussing issues, barriers and behaviours, that rarely come to the public eye due to fear of the consequences. We work tirelessly behind closed doors to try and address these issues without ‘naming and shaming’. Change does take action, otherwise things just stay the same. Our March 2025 edition will see an article about the increasingly poor treatment of photographers, where we have seen female photographers bullied during public performances, poor pay and even more recently, a photograph used on an album cover without credit, payment or even permission to use it. As you look through this magazine, go to a jazz club, scroll through social media, please do consider how our jazz world would be without photographers – artists, venues, marketing etc – and not forgetting the beauty of capturing unforgettable moments for us all.

As always, I - we - are grateful for the overwhelming support for our work. 206 pages and nearly 100 women in this magazine and this doesn't even touch the surface of the incredible women out there. If you find something you like, please share it far and wide, and help to change the narrative.

Fiona Ross, Founder

Photo of NYX and Laura Misch by Monika S Jakubowska

YOUN SUN NAH

Photo by Seung Yull Nah



Photo by Seung Yull Nah



YOUN SUN NAH

The award-winning singer, songwriter, and performer Youn Sun Nah performed at Union Chapel, London on October 6th as part of the K festival, marking her 30 year career. Performing with multiple award-winning pianist Bojan Z, this was a concert full of soul enriching music, astounding musicianship and a level of artistry I have truly never seen.

Youn Sun Nah magically combines strength, power and intense drama with a beautifully honest sense of vulnerability and lightness. I have never seen anything like it. The setting was perfect. Union Chapel is a stunning venue and despite the huge space, Youn brought us all in close, and made it feel like a truly intimate space where we were honoured to be. A space where she was free to be, free to express, free to share her immense artistry with us.

Youn has performed alongside a huge range of legends including Herbie Hancock, Regina Carter and Esperanza Spalding and was the first Korean vocalist to receive the Officier de l' Ordre des Arts et des Lettres (Officer of Order of Arts and Letters) from France, one of the highest honours that can be given to an artist by the country.

Released in August of this year, Youn's 12th album Elles is a stunning collection of interpretations of female led songs and songwriters who have a special place in shaping her artistry including Björk, Sarah Vaughan, Grace Jones, Roberta Flack and Edith Piaf. The impact of these influences are clear and

like many of the artists who have inspired her, Youn cannot be put in a neat little genre box, thank goodness. She merges genre boundaries as if they were never there, combining many styles and genres from classical to jazz, rock to pop to musical theatre – you name it, it is gloriously all present. I'm not sure quite how she does it, but audiences across the globe are grateful she does. Youn connects with audiences in such a palpable way and having seen her live and speaking to her, I can honestly say she seems to possess some kind of truly magical presence. She is captivating. A beautiful contradiction.

Youn's journey began in South Korea with piano lessons as a child, leading to singing gospel with the Korean Symphony Orchestra and an initial move into theatre. It was not long before she found her calling and established her own unique place. Growing up embedded in a beautifully rich world of music nurtured by her musical parents, her father Na Young-soo was a founder of the National Chorus of Korea and was known as the 'godfather of Korean choir'.

I can say that I grew up in concerts. My father was a dedicated choir conductor and the founder of the national choir in Korea and so from a very young age I attended and I think that's where I really found the beauty of the human voice. They have a great impact on me and still my mom (Mi Jung Kim) gives me some vocal lessons over the phone. She majored in Korean

traditional instruments and at the same time she worked in classical singing and performed in musicals. I discovered The Sound of Music through her and I put an arrangement of 'My Favourite Things' with a Kalimba on my album Same Girl.

I was surrounded by music since my childhood but becoming a singer, a jazz singer never crossed my mind, and it was really by accident. I studied literature in university and worked for a fashion company and then realised that I was just not good at that, so after quitting my job I thought what can I do? What can I do in life? I met a musician friend, who told me about a musical that was looking for untrained actors, actors who can sing a little bit but I said no, this is not for me! But he knew that my mom was a pioneer of Korean musicals, so he just sent a demo tape off without telling me! They called me later and said they were interested in meeting me. I went and was tested and from that moment I thought maybe it's singing that I really want to do, to do in life. I was asked to continue after a month of the play, but I said no, I'm not a trained actress and that's not something I'm going to do. So, I stopped to pursue my thing, and they respected my decision. So, my experience with musicals is really short.

Regardless of how she arrived, arrive she did! There seems to be something in her very DNA, a deep desire to communicate with people which is extraordinary. Youn possesses a deep connection with audiences. Her performance of the legendary Norma Winstone 'Just Sometimes' at Union Chapel was jaw dropping. The emotional intensity of this performance was remarkable, and I was not the only one who shed a few tears during this performance. Such a deeply emotive performance, it was truly Oscar worthy. The way she communicates with an audience cannot be taught.

Your latest album Elles plays tribute to some formidable women that have inspired you in your career. How did this album initially take shape?

At first, I didn't plan to include only female songs or female singer songwriters on my new album. I had wanted to record a jazz standards album for quite some time and as I started gathering songs, I realised that the ones that meant the most were sung by female singers, so I changed my plan and started listening to all the singers who influenced me and inspired me - the artistry of their voices. It was so amazing to go through these female singers that shaped my musical journey. Unfortunately, I could only pick 10 singers this time, but if I could include all the singers I love, the album would span more than 10 discs! For instance, Bjork, she's a masterpiece and I saw her once, in concert and it was unbelievable. She didn't say a word. Well, she only said one word at the end she only said 'thank'. It was like a movie; she is a genius at self reinvention. I know I am kind of introverted and I'm not as brave and creative as them but somehow, I find courage on stage and it's because of her, because of them.

Nina Simone for me, is like music itself. I read somewhere that she's a musical shaman. Everything she sang, became her own, became unique and that's why I really respect her. At the beginning, when I wanted to record jazz standards, I realised that even contemporary songs resonated with me just as much as the classics so maybe that's why these people, singers... they are timeless. Nina Simone was not afraid of picking songs; she made them her own.

It is fascinating to hear that she does not consider herself brave, until she steps on the stage, because just stepping on the stage is a sign of her fearlessness, especially when you consider she suffers from stage fright. You would never know this seeing her perform – fierce, courageous, powerful are all words I would use to describe Youn's performance.

I very much suffer from stage fright. I decided I just have to live with it. I've tried everything but nothing works for me and

Photo by Seung Yull Nah



and the only solution is going on stage.

Storytelling is key to Youn's artistry. The narratives that flow through her songs are exhilarating. Her masterful use of emotions, both through words and her body is incredible.

Yes, that element is really, really important to me. When I sing in French for example, performing in Korea or Ecuador or anywhere, the people, even though they don't really understand it, they feel it. That's unbelievable. That's why I think for me it is very important that I have all these emotions, all these stories and hold these sensations and sincerity in songs.

Youn's visit to London was part of the 11th edition of the K-Music festival, platforming an incredible range of Korea's most important artists across London.

They want to show what Korean music culture really is. We don't just have traditional music and K Pop! We have a very strong emotional and rhythmic core and Korean people are said to have long enjoyed dancing and singing. Growing up and going to friends' or family gatherings, they used to turn into endless sing-alongs. We really love singing (and we like drinking as well!) the festival is wanting to showcase this not very well-known side of Korean music. All the Korean kids learn how to play piano, but not traditional music because it's very complicated to learn. I didn't learn traditional Korean music and I don't incorporate traditional elements into my music, but I think there's a little touch in it. I am very happy to be part of this festival.

30 years and 12 albums is a significant milestone. To end, I asked Youn if there was anything people should know about her, that perhaps we haven't talked about or that she felt was important for people to know.

When I first started playing and singing on stage, we didn't have any social media or anything, and there were a lot of people who'd never heard about me and were kind of surprised - she's Asian, wow! I had to work hard but now you can google me and find me... Sometimes I played more than 200 gigs a year because I want physical contact with the audience. People ask me why we can't find enough videos from you? I can't say that I am against it, but I prefer to see people in person. I just want to spend time with people. I want to have a conversation with them. Every time I have a concert, I run out after the show to meet people. It's not about signing or taking pictures; I want to have a conversation with them. Sometimes they inspire me, sometimes we cry together because I just shared my experience with them. I just want more chances to do this.



Photo by Seung Yull Nah

After seeing Youn's incredible performance, I went over to see her and it was such an overwhelmingly touching scene. She was absolutely surrounded by people, with a beautiful sparkle in her eye, talking to her audience about their favourite songs and moments from the performance. Her warmth, kindness, honesty and sparkle in her eye was contagious and everyone in that moment was touched by her. It was incredible.

YOUN SUN NAH WEBSITE CLICK HERE



Photo by Seung Yull Nah





ON THE BOOKCASE WITH DR ALEXIS MCGEE

Platforming female authors across the world, our 'On The Bookcase' series features over one hundred books written by women, covering a range of topics in jazz and the wider music industry. We are honoured to support these authors and explore their work through 'On The Bookcase' podcast series.

Our recent guest Dr Alexis McGee, author of *From Blues to Beyoncé: A Century of Black Women's Generational Sonic Rhetorics* had a fascinating conversation with Fiona Ross exploring the importance of her new book, her career and the space needed for respecting female black voices. Below is an excerpt from the conversation.

FR: Welcome Alexis! We've had your book on our bookcase for a while and there's many things I would love to explore, but before we tackle the book, it would be lovely to find out a bit more about you!

AM: *I am an assistant professor of research in the school of journalism, writing and media studies. We are a big conglomerate of different fields, which is perfect for the kind of work that I do at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada. I'm specifically focused on the writing portion of it, not so much in the media or the journalism aspect of it, but definitely crossing disciplines is something that I love to do and that my work calls me to do. When I'm researching black feminist rhetorical theory or the sound of black women musicians, things like that, I'm definitely crossing over in different territories.*

FR: What brought you to start working in

this world, the need to write? What actually led you to decide that this is my calling, and this is what I need to do?

AM: *From really early on I really traded language through music. For me growing up, I had hearing difficulties and a speech impediment and so I was learning the world through music, through vibrations and through dance. And so that's where my body is situated and drawn to, because that's the best way I can visualise how to communicate, how to talk across different languages and across different boundaries. I was always situated, fascinated and needed that space to sort of explore my identity. Growing up in the American South, I was always pushed and pulled in different iterations of my identity, trying to formulate that - I have a black father and a white mother - so we're going back and forth between the American South and the American north and there's a whole lot of history in context with those two sorts of binary entities and locations. So, the best way for me to communicate and to find myself and explore both sides of me and all the other facets of that identity, was through music, through sound and through dance.*

Then when I got into university, because I loved the body so much, I initially went to study biology and to be a teacher of life sciences, but that didn't necessarily work out in my favour, so I switched majors and went into English. I was always compelled to write the story, to write about what I know, to investigate and the best way for me to visualise that kind of feeling that my body is resonating with, was to write. So, I've always been writing, putting things

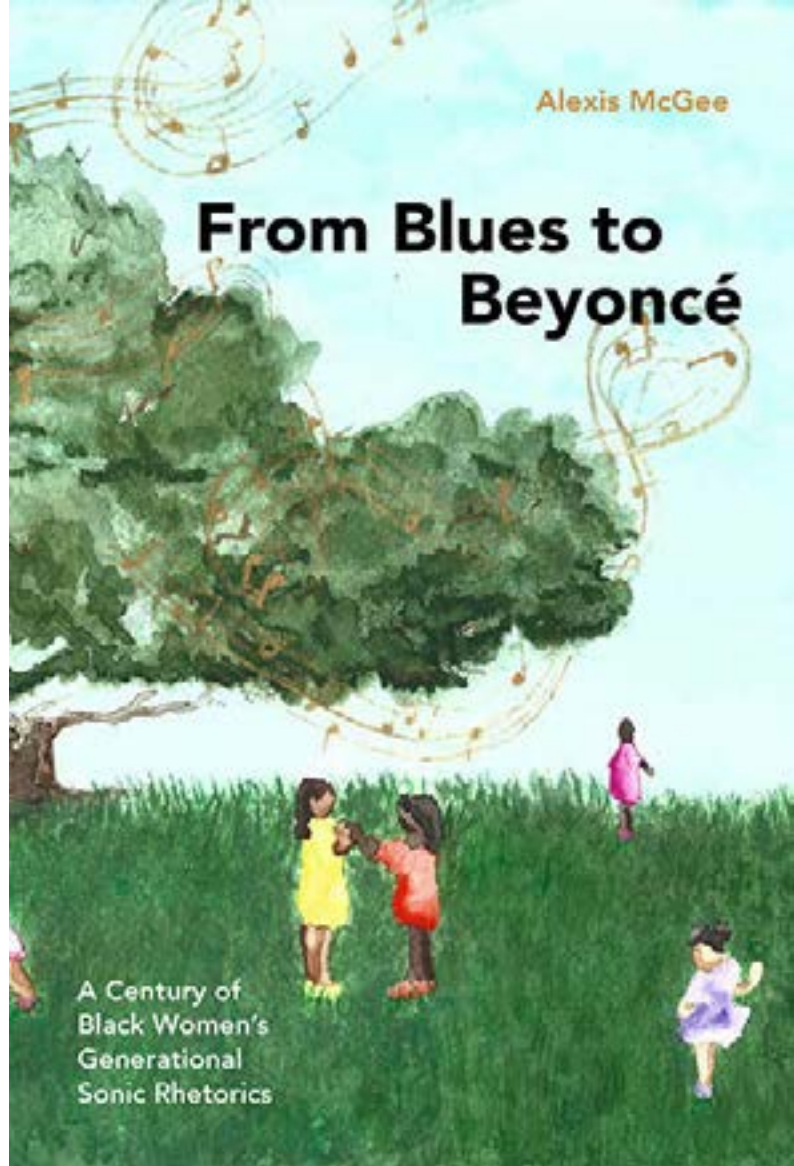
to paper and mapping out how I'm understanding the ways in which different frequencies are operating. I just let it take me wherever it could go, and I've just been writing about music ever since!

FR: The work you've done is truly incredible and there is so much to explore! Am I right in thinking this is your first book?

AM: *This is! It has been a long time in the making and it sort of stemmed from my dissertation, but I wanted to explore more than just one facet of black women and Blues women. I wanted to talk about how black women are situated across time and across space, and how we have those conversations amongst one another even if we're not physically present with each other. That's where I'm currently situated and where I will probably stay situated and keep looking at all the different ways in which we communicate through sound.*

FR: One of the many things that initially attracted me to your book was that I don't think I've ever seen a book that spans this incredible range of women - from Cardi B, Nina Simone, Billie Holiday, Beyonce etc. So often, especially in academia and certainly in the jazz world, we are very isolated and it's very rare, I think, to see a really thorough conversation discussing how it all fits together. You have created such an important space to be able to explore black women's voices and the timeliness of it, in America in particular, is obviously incredibly relevant. So, although it seems obvious, can you tell me what led you to decide that you needed to write this book? What brought you to that point?

AM: *I was always sort of trying to figure out my identity and grappling with all these different, quite oppositional frames of my identity when I was growing up. I also, in my schooling, didn't think that I was heard and I wasn't reading authors that resonated with me, that reflected the things that I wanted to talk about or my identity.*



So, I was called to really think deeply about what it means to do this kind of work as a black woman - where is the body situated? How is it framed? How is it talked about? Where are we having that conversation with each other? And once I got to that point, I really wanted to emphasise that this is a conversation about black women for black women and not just in a particular space. We often are drawing on people past and present, the things that we feel in our gut that's not necessarily vocalised, and I'm cautious and cognizant of those types of conversations, where it's either dismissed or it's not seen, it's not heard or it's trivialised. We have had these conversations; we will still have these conversations, and if you don't recognise it perhaps we need to reorganise or resituate our frames of reference. Here in the work that I'm trying to produce, it's in a type of way that we can try to start to have those conversations once we reorient, once we

become open to recognising that black women communicate in all these different, fabulous ways. And it's not about staying the same. It's often so intimately tied to how we navigate our own identities, how we have those conversations. I was able to reflect and use the work of these black women to help me feel more comfortable about who I am and help me reclaim part of my identity, really sit with my own histories and recognise and also amplify the fact that blackness is not monolithic, there's not necessarily one particular type of blackness. And black women are speaking to those nuances and all these different ways so, I really wanted to highlight that, not only as part of my own self journey but also to give back to the communities, to say that I see you, I see the work that we've been doing. It is important to celebrate the work of all the women who have come before us and who will come after us and I, by no means, think this is a finished conversation.

FR: There's a lovely quote from you that I read in an interview which I love:

'I wanted to celebrate, honour and respect the daily lives of black women and this work was inspired by my overwhelming love for black women and my urge to celebrate the abundantly clear ways in which we live time and time again and to make a way out of no way'.

I love that quote. The importance of you sharing the stories of women that don't have a space is vital and not enough people do. It is such an important book. Did you feel any pressure with the responsibility of this book?

AM: *I think there wasn't so much pressure in terms of the writing or the research because for me, I really genuinely felt and still feel like it's a celebration. I wanted to honour the work that they were doing and*

just give what I could, and so for me that was a pleasure to do and it was a calling that I felt. Of course I feel there's a responsibility in doing that and so I guess the pressure that was translated was a responsibility of care, and a celebration to highlight and to amplify the work that they've done. It was more about transforming, amplifying and highlighting and not necessarily to give a particular narrative, as long as I could open up a space to have the conversation to showcase- then I've done my duty.



Cardi B by Anthony Kane

FR: We spoke earlier about the number of women whose stories are untold and the number of women in the public eye that are misunderstood. How did you even begin to decide which women you would include? Did you have a starting point and then it organically evolved?

AM: *That was a really tough internal struggle because I feel that there are many instances where we could include more voices and that was actually the hardest part of writing this. But it did sort of happen organically, perhaps because of my bias and my love towards music and really being able to speak across different genres. My dad is from New Orleans and*

Nina Simone by Gerrit de Bruin

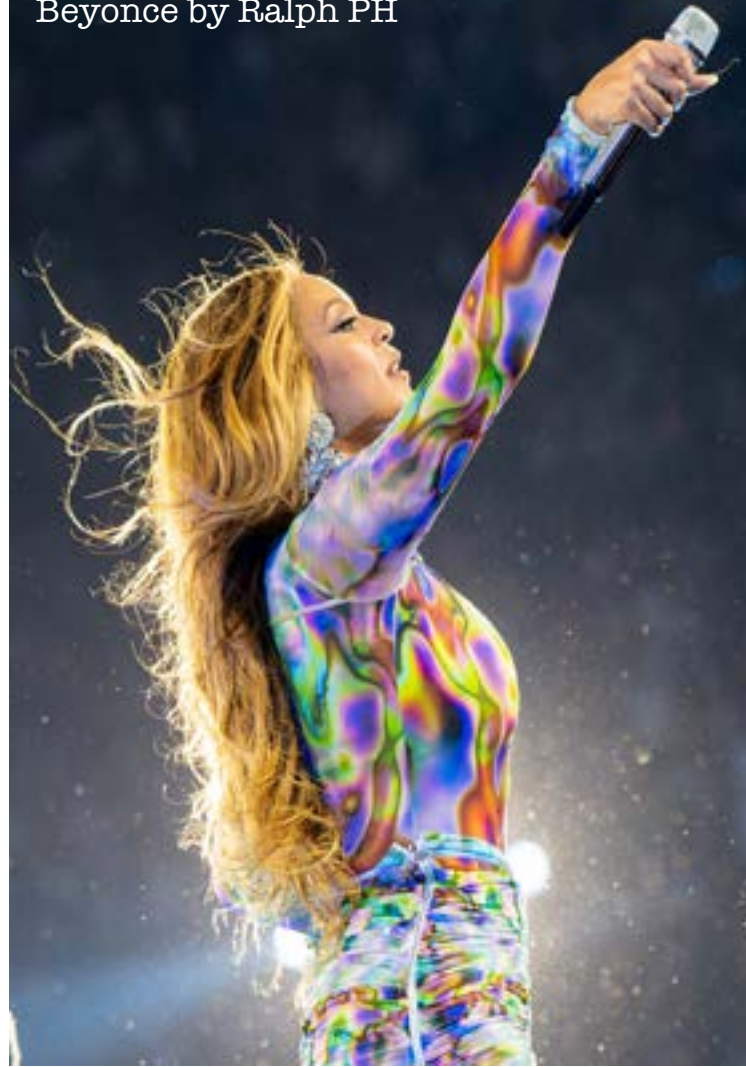


so having that background and being able to think across different types of black music is really attributed to him - because I was already exposed to that in my childhood and already been having those conversations in earlier years with my thesis or dissertation, because I was always constantly listening to black music.

FR: I have to say it's particularly topical just as one example, you have Beyoncé in the book and it wasn't that long ago that everyone was going crazy about her country album. It's a perfect example of why books like this are needed, you know when uninformed people just don't understand where women's voices are coming from. And you know more than I do, that often women are criticised before men are criticised and the general public don't take the time to understand women's artistry and Beyoncé is just one example. You don't need to do much research to find the criticism and the lack of understanding.

AM: *One of the chapters that I have on sonic sharecropping, which is what I have called it, really highlighted for me the really explicit ways in which the music industry attempts to make blackness a particular type of consumption, in like fungibility, where we can be interchangeable to audiences, and to recognise that this is a systematic mechanism in which to devalue black bodies. When I was writing that chapter I was just struck by how obvious, how explicit and intentional these types of practices are. And then put it in current time with more of a contemporary issue, how it's still being perpetuated in these maybe more nuanced forms but it's still quite obvious. Especially given Beyoncé's country album, Cowboy Carter, how we still see the effects, the lingering effects of what has happened in the past when Blues music was coming out, or when R&B was coming out and race tracks were being produced that coaptation and that malleability with producers or directors, however you want*

Beyonce by Ralph PH



to call it. People who were managing the artist wanted a particular sound for their own benefit because they wanted to make blackness producible, or they wanted to make blackness easily distributed for a particular purpose for their own gains, and not necessarily in conversation with what black culture is or black history is, and how it's being communicated through these oral narratives and through the performance of the story. I was taken aback when I was writing that chapter and that was probably one of my favourite chapters to write and to work through and was really eye opening for me.

To listen to the whole conversation on our podcast, [please click here](#)

[Click here to purchase](#)
[From Blues to Beyoncé: A Century of Black Women's Generational Sonic Rhetorics](#)

SYLVIA CUENCA



Photo by Chris Drukker



SYLVIA CUENCA

LIFE ON THE BANDSTAND

BY ISABEL MARQUEZ

Sylvia Cuenca has built an impressive career sharing the bandstand with some of jazz's most standout ensembles. Alongside the likes of Joe Henderson and Clark Terry, Cuenca has secured her place in New York's most wanted jazz circle, becoming a regular in New York's hottest clubs, as well as touring across the globe with the Joe Henderson Quartet. Her work with jazz luminaries is endless, continuing to this day alongside her music writing and important actions in the sector. She was a guest clinician at the 'Sisters in Jazz Program' at the International Association for Jazz Education (IAJE) Convention in NYC and the Mary Lou Williams Festival at the Kennedy Centre in Washington D.C.

It was such an honour to ask her some questions about her long, impressive career, particularly what experiences have stood out for her along the way.

Could you tell me a little about your music education and your journey to get to where you are today?

In junior high school, I took a snare drum class and fell in love with the instrument. Shortly after, my father arranged private drum lessons, and I continued private lessons through high school. In the summer of my senior year, I attended San Jose City College in San Jose, CA, which had a strong jazz program directed by trombonist/arranger Dave Eshelman. I studied theory and developed my sight-reading skills by playing in jazz combos and big bands. Around

the same time, I won a scholarship to attend the Stanford Jazz Workshop in Stanford, CA. Victor Lewis, the drum instructor, had a profound effect on my playing, and he was the one who encouraged me to move to New York City to pursue my career.

After I moved to NYC in 1985, I attended Long Island University and continued my music education under director Pete Yellin. After a few semesters, I started touring and had to put my college degree on hold. When I was between tours, I continued to study privately with Victor Lewis, Adam Nussbaum, and Brazilian drummer Portinho. In 1992, I received a study grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. I chose to study with drum master Keith Copeland for one year. With Mr. Copeland, I continued to develop my 4-way independence. He also made me aware of my centre of gravity while I played, which enabled me to execute difficult techniques with both of my feet. I learned about the lineage of jazz drummers and studied the classic recordings of these drummers. In 2014, I went back to school and completed my Jazz Performance degree from Empire State University in New York City.

What was it like performing with the Joe Henderson Quartet? Could you tell me a bit more about that experience?

I first met Joe Henderson when he was a guest artist with the San Jose City College big band. Years later, when I moved to



Photo by Chris Drukker

New York City, I went to hear him play at the Village Vanguard, and I reintroduced myself to him. He remembered me from California, and he asked me for my phone number. A few months later, some friends told me that Joe was looking for me. One day, I got a phone call from someone who sounded like Joe, but I thought it was someone playing a joke on me. Then I realised it was Joe and he was asking if I was available for a 3-week European tour. This was the beginning of my 4-year stint with his quartet. It was also my first time in Europe, and it was some of the best years of my life. We toured and performed at various clubs, concerts, and festivals both domestically and internationally.

Most of the time, he would let us interpret the music as we heard it. He wasn't the kind of leader to give a lot of verbal direction unless it had to do with a specific figure or arrangement. He would say, "Play what you mean and mean what you play!" He made me aware of the importance of playing with conviction. Many times, he would give you a solo and the whole band would leave the stage and let you work out whatever you had to say musically. It was challenging, but it made me dig deep, and it helped me to grow as a musician. He also helped me to be mindful of the form of a song by constantly singing the melody in my head behind solos, including my own. By playing with Henderson, I learned how to be a sensitive and musical team player in a small group setting.

On stage, he would never have a setlist or charts, and the band never knew what we were going to play next. We played a lot of standards like 'All the Things You Are,' 'Lush Life', 'Ask Me Now', 'You Know I Care', 'Without a Song', 'Invitation', 'Round Midnight', 'What Is This Thing Called Love', and so many others. Sometimes, he would have one-word cues for telling the band the next selection. He would turn around and say, "Lady B" for the Sam Rivers tune Beatrice or "Jin" for Jinrikisha or "Isssss" for Isfahan by Billy Strayhorn. From the tunes

that Joe wrote, we played 'Record-a-me', 'Y Todavía La Quiero', 'Isotope', 'Shade of Jade', 'Punjab', 'Serenity', 'Mode for Joe', 'Our Thing', 'Black Narcissus', 'Gazelle', 'Inner Urge', 'Blue Bossa' and many other great tunes.

It was a dream come true and an honour to share the stage with jazz legend Joe Henderson, and I'm forever grateful for the opportunity.

You have also played with several other huge names on the scene. Do you have a moment in your career that particularly stands out to you?

I've been very fortunate to experience many moments that stand out in my career so far. I'd like to share a few of them with you.

Since I started playing this music, I have intensely listened to and studied the music of both Joe Henderson and Clark Terry. Each of them has a very distinct and easily recognisable voice on their instrument... something that we all strive for.

The most incredible musical moments that I've ever experienced were when I had the opportunity to share the stage with these two iconic jazz artists. It was exhilarating to know their sound in my head from recordings and then look up and realise their sound was coming out of their horn right in front of me and that they trusted me to share the bandstand with them! I'll treasure these moments for the rest of my life.

One evening, I was at home, and I got a call from a trumpet player friend of mine, Eddie Allen. He told me that the drummer didn't show up for the gig. It was a week-long engagement with the legendary saxophonist/composer Frank Foster's Loud Minority Big Band at the Jazz Standard in NYC. He asked me how soon I could get to the club with my drums and play with them. I jumped up and loaded my drums in my car and rushed over to the Jazz Stand-



ard. When I got there, the big band (of some of the best musicians in NYC) were on stage, ready to play, and they were just waiting for me to set up my kit. Sweating and out of breath, I stayed focused and sight-read the infamous, challenging compositions and arrangements by Frank Foster. It wasn't perfect, but I guess it was ok because he asked me to play the rest of the week, which included a live recording of the big band. It was proof that you never know what can happen in NYC and that you should be ready for anything at any time!

Another time, I was playing a week-long gig at the Village Vanguard with the Clark Terry quintet. I had my eyes closed on this one tune, but when I opened them, I looked on the bench beside the drum set (known as drummers' row) and sitting there checking me out were 3 of my drum heroes, including Billy Hart, Albert "Tootie" Heath, and Louis Hayes!!! I was completely shocked!! Then Clark asked each of them to sit in, and I got to sit right next to

them and check out each of them and how they interpreted the music.....it was so inspiring!!!

One more experience I'd like to share was getting the call from the great pianist/composer Kenny Barron. He called to see if I was available for a 3-week tour in South Korea and Japan with him, bassist Ray Drummond and tenor saxophonist Michael Brecker!! It was one of the highlights of my career to have an opportunity to play with these amazing artists and very kind, encouraging and supportive human beings. It was another dream come true that I will never forget!!

How would you describe the New York jazz scene and your experience as a female drummer?

New York City has been and will always be the mecca for jazz. Musicians around the world are drawn to its palpable energy and the many opportunities to meet, perform and tour with some of the greatest

musicians alive today. Every serious jazz musician should spend some time in NYC to study with their heroes/heroines, listen to the jazz masters play live and feel the urgency in the air, which always seems to come out in the music.

From the time I started playing the drums, it was something that I truly enjoyed. I wanted to learn and improve my playing so that I could have the experience of playing with musicians who were better than me. I challenged myself by working on my weaknesses so that I could expand my vocabulary and express myself better in my instrument.

I was aware that I was entering a male-dominated field, but I never thought about that very much. I just knew that I found something I loved to do. I never had time to think negatively about being a woman drummer on the NYC jazz scene. For me, it's always been about the music and constantly striving to be a better musician. The music doesn't have a gender. If you study your craft, put the work in and play with passion, the musicians who hear you will respect you, and you will get hired. Of course, there will always be those musicians who would never even consider hiring a woman. I stay away from them and instead surround myself with positive and open-minded people.

Concerning releasing your own music, do you enjoy the composition process? What does this process look like for you?

I'm still developing as a composer, and I plan on spending more time growing in this area. I have many pages of fragmented ideas that I'd like to complete. I'm usually inspired by an incident in life, a memorable experience, or a musical idea that I've heard someone play. Sometimes, I'll compose a tune based on a drum groove that I love to play, and I'll try to layer ideas on top of it. On my first CD as a leader, I wrote a tune, and it's the title track called *The Crossing*. It's dedicated to a close friend and gifted pianist, Mercedes Rossy,

who suddenly passed away as her career was taking off. It was shocking and heart-breaking to the entire NY jazz scene.

I tried to convey some of these emotions in that composition. I've been a huge fan of Brazilian music for a very long time. On my new CD, I wrote a samba called *Resiliencia*, which means *Resilience* in Portuguese. I wrote it during the pandemic and dedicated it to all the musicians around the world and what we had to endure during the dark times of the pandemic. For me, it's a gradual process, but I'm looking forward to continuing my journey as a composer.

As you have been performing with huge artists over the last 20 years, how has the scene changed? Do you think there is anything else that needs to change?

I moved to NYC from San Jose, CA, on August 22, 1985. At that time, there were all kinds of jazz clubs in NYC. Innovators of this music would be performing every night, and it was very common to see them hanging out after their gigs at late-night clubs like Bradley's in the village. At that time, bands led by legendary musicians would hold frequent auditions for upcoming tours and performances.

There were opportunities for young musicians to be mentored by leaders like Art Blakey, Horace Silver, Betty Carter, Freddie Hubbard, Elvin Jones, Art Farmer, and Clifford Jordan, to name a few. The biggest difference between the scenes in the 1980s and now is that these kinds of mentoring opportunities do not exist anymore. This is mostly because a lot of these musicians have passed on and also because the group concept isn't as prominent as it was back then. It's unfortunate for young musicians of today because you can't get this kind of playing or road experience from the classroom or a textbook.

It would be great if there were more

opportunities today to mentor younger musicians. I think by mentoring them there would be less arrogance and more humility and respect for older established artists. I think it's still important for young musicians to study and know the rich history of this music and know the lineage of the players that helped to create it. For drums, the great drummer Lenny White refers to this list as The Magnificent 7. These are the drummers that helped to shape modern drumming as we know it today. They include Kenny Clarke, Art Blakey, Max Roach, Philly Joe Jones, Roy Haynes, Elvin Jones, and Tony Williams. Knowing the history gives your playing more depth and meaning.

What do the next steps look like for you?
What will you be getting up to in the next few years?

Currently, I'm bi-coastal and splitting my time between the San Francisco Bay Area and New York City. I'm enjoying reconnecting with musicians I knew in California a long time ago and also connecting with new musicians on both coasts. I want to continue to grow as a musician and composer.... there's always something new to learn. I'm also hoping to tour more with musicians and friends who inspire me to play my best. Right now, I'm also in the middle of mixing a recording from a few years ago. I'd like to complete this and release it sometime in the new year and have a CD release at a club in NYC.

[Click here to visit
Sylvia Cuenca website](#)

HANNAH HORTON

BREAKING BARRIERS
WITH THE BARITONE

Photo by Tatiana Gorilovsky







Photo by Tatiana Gorilovsky

BREAKING BARRIERS WITH THE BARITONE: HANNAH HORTON'S JOURNEY IN JAZZ

Nominated for Best Newcomer at the Parliamentary Jazz Awards last year, Hannah Horton has quickly become one of the leading saxophonists in the UK. Known as a 'melodic maverick' Hannah has been inspiring audiences with her original compositions bringing a remarkable and much needed freshness and innovation to the jazz saxophone scene. The response to her three albums has led to sold out shows across the UK, acclaim across the globe and a much sought after merchandise range!

While we all dream to work in a space where gender is not discussed, it is relevant here to mention the lack of female baritone saxophonists and therefore the added importance of Hannah's work. Look at any list across the world of jazz baritone players and there are very few women. There are trailblazers. The incredible Claire Daley, who very sadly passed recently, is one of the few women to be recognized for her baritone by the Jazz Journalist Association, having won Baritone saxophonist of the year several times. There has been a significant absence of female baritone players in the Downbeat Poll since it began in 1936. Lauren Sevia, another brilliant trailblazer often appears, of which Jeff Stockton said 'In 2009 there aren't too many jobs that can't be held down by a woman. One that comes to mind might be the baritone saxophone chair in the Mingus Big Band. But that's exactly where Lauren Sevia cut her teeth'

Hannah has created a much needed and highly valued space, especially in the UK and she can proudly add her name to the list of the baritone trailblazers.

There have historically been very few female baritone sax players, with Zena Latta (1925-2016) from the International Sweethearts of Rhythm band probably being the first known baritone player. She in fact only began playing the baritone to be able to stay in the band. What first led you to the baritone?

The bari found me more than I found it! I started on alto and quickly moved to tenor, but there was something about the baritone's depth and resonance that I couldn't ignore. The first time I held one, it was like being handed a voice that was both powerful and tender. It challenged me to think differently about music—more about space, weight, and emotion. It felt like the bari could express everything I couldn't put into words, and I've been hooked ever since. Having loved playing bassoon and bass clarinet into my 20s I have always been drawn to the earthy lower tones, to the lower depths of instrument families.

[This website](#) has a fairly comprehensive list of jazz bari players with a range of styles within the jazz heading. Ian Shaw was famously quoted as saying "Hannah makes the big beast baritone sax sound like an angel". How would you describe your bari sound? How has your journey been so far, in developing your own unique sound?

Ian Shaw's description makes me blush every time, but I'll take it! I'd describe my sound as soulful and dynamic—rooted in jazz tradition but unafraid to stretch the boundaries. The bari can growl, whisper, be punchy, and sing too, and I love exploring those textures. Developing my sound has been a journey of balance: blending

the bari's raw power with the subtlety of storytelling. Being a sax player our sound is a never ending journey. It's taken years of listening, experimenting, and, honestly, a lot of reed-testing! I want people to feel something visceral when they hear my bari—like it's speaking directly to them.

Which musicians have been inspiring you along the way?

So many! On the bari, players like Gerry Mulligan and Harry Carney have been foundational, but I also love what modern bari players like Lauren Sevian and Tony Kofi are doing. Tenor sax players including Stan Getz, Jan Garbarek, and Wayne Shorter have also really inspired me. Beyond that, I draw inspiration from artists across genres: the phrasing of John Coltrane, the soul of Nina Simone, and the freedom of Joni Mitchell. And, of course, Zena Latto—what a trailblazer! Her story reminds me that we're all part of something bigger.

You compose and play other saxes, so how does the bari feature when you are writing? Do you write a certain amount for each sax, or go with the flow?

I usually go with the flow. Sometimes the bari leads the way—its rich, earthy tone just demands attention. Other times, I might sketch a melody on tenor and then realise it needs the bari's weight to bring it to life. When I'm composing, I think about emotion and storytelling, and the bari often adds the layers that give the story its depth. It's like the wise elder of the saxophone family—it has so much to say.

You are endorsed by the world renowned Selmer – one of only a few women across the world. What is it about Selmer saxes that make them so special?

Selmer saxes feel like an extension of me. They're beautifully crafted, with a tone that's both warm and vibrant. What I love most is their responsiveness—it's like they're alive! Whether I'm whispering

through a ballad or roaring through an up-tempo number, my Selmer bari gives me the freedom to express exactly what I'm feeling, it feels an extension of me.

On a practical note and for sax geeks out there...what reeds do you use and how do you carry all those saxes with you?

I'm currently loving Legere plastic reeds—they're consistent, play well over the whole range of the instrument and really bring out the bari's natural warmth and edge. As for carrying all my saxes... let's just say it's a workout! I use a combination of sturdy cases and a lot of careful planning. I've got my setup down to a fine art now—packing light but always having what I need. And yes, my bari always gets the VIP treatment!

As we mentioned earlier, historically there are not that many female bari players and still not that many now! You are carving out a much needed space. You are gigging all the time and your albums have been critically acclaimed. Can you tell us about your albums?

Absolutely! My albums are really a snapshot of where I am in my musical journey. "Inside Out" released in 2021 was all about exploring my voice as both a composer and a saxophonist, blending jazz with other influences like folk and funk. Early in 2020 my dad lost his battle with cancer, and then we went into lockdown, and my outlook on life changed like it did for a lot of people during that time. I found myself composing, playing and experimenting more with my sax, a kind of self therapy and expression which culminated in "Inside Out". I never expected the wonderful reviews and how it was received by the jazz community, which really spurred me on to continue my journey in jazz.

"Live In Soho" came about by accident really! My quartet played the iconic Pizza Express in January 2023 which was the end of my "Inside Out" tour. I listened back



to the recording afterwards and I was so excited by how the band sounded I just knew I had to share this with the world. This album has 'Belle' my new Selmer bari sax on it, as well as my vintage Selmer tenor sax. This album captures the live mood, pushes boundaries and emotion even further, experimenting with textures and moods. Both albums are deeply personal—my way of connecting with listeners and sharing my stories. The bari, of course, is front and centre throughout, shaping the music in ways only it can.

Looking forward to 2025, can you tell us about any plans you have for next year?

2025 is shaping up to be an exciting year! I'm planning to release new music that delves even deeper into my sound—it's going to be bold and full of surprises. I'll also be collaborating with some incredible artists, and there's some great shows coming up that I can't wait to announce. There's also exciting news planned for J Steps, the under 18 female and non binary jazz group I direct! Beyond that, I'm committed to carving out more space for female musicians, especially sax players, and continuing to celebrate the diversity and richness of jazz. Watch this space—it's going to be a big year!



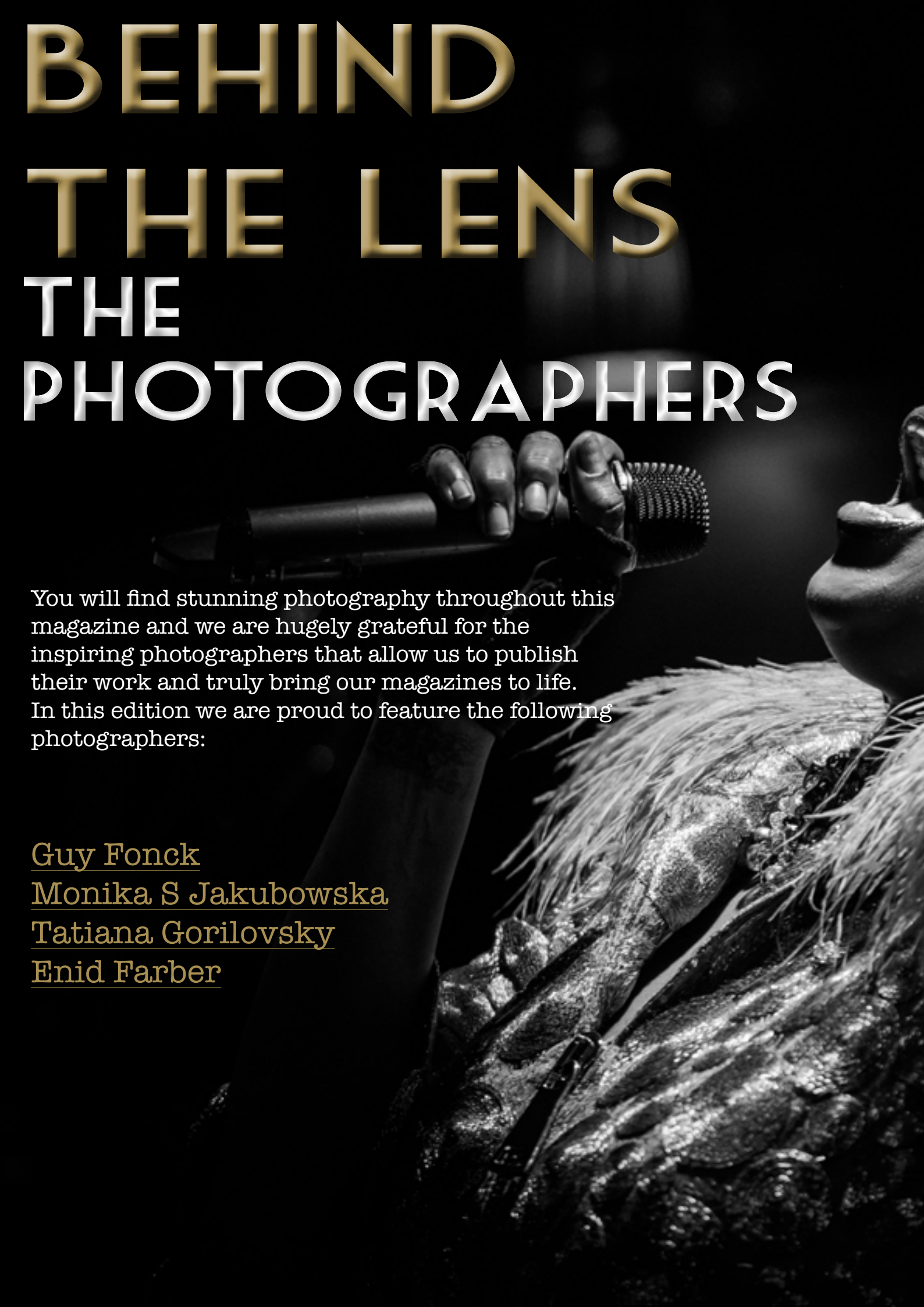
Interview by Fiona Ross
Photography by Tatiana Gorilovsky

[HANNAH HORTON](#)
[WEBSITE CLICK HERE](#)



Photo by Tatiana Gorilovsky

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:

Guy Fonck

Monika S Jakubowska

Tatiana Gorilovsky

Enid Farber



Macy Gray by Monika S Jakubowska

FOCUS ON WOMEN IN JAZZ BY GUY FONCK



Anne Pacey,
Luxembourg,
2024,
Photo by Guy Fonck



FOCUS ON WOMEN IN JAZZ

WITH GUY FONCK

The brilliant Luxembourgish photographer Guy Fonck has recently released a stunning collection of black and white photos in his new book *Focus on Women in Jazz*. Featuring a fantastic range of musicians from 40 different countries captured at over 500 concerts and spanning several decades of Guy's extensive portfolio of work. With a key focus on Luxembourg's vibrant jazz scene, the book platforms icons who have shaped the scene along with inspiring contemporary artists including Melba Liston, Dorothy Donegan, Maria Schneider, Lakecia Benjamin, Nabou Claerhout and so many more.

Having worked in photography for nearly fifty years, Guy's pictures first won recognition in 1975 at various national and international photo exhibitions. His work has won countless awards and been featured in publications and exhibitions across the world including the International Photo Exhibition of Contemporary Music Burghausen, Germany, Malakoff Jazz Café, a collective exhibition "Carte blanche aux photographes luxembourgeois", Conservatoire de Musique in Luxembourg and JAZZ: The Smithsonian Anthology to mention a few.

It was an absolute pleasure to meet Guy and I had such a wonderful conversation exploring his work and the passion behind his book.

An obvious question, but what led you to create a book focussing on women in jazz?

I focused on women because of my wife. About a year ago she asked me if I had

enough photos to create a book about women and I said no that isn't possible, I don't have enough women. But I looked in my archives and I was really surprised that I did have enough pictures of women! At the same time, there was a study here in Luxembourg which analysed cultural programming in Luxembourg during 2022 and 2023 (Analysis of the 2022-2023 cultural programming from a gender-sensitive perspective in Luxembourg) The study was on dance, theatre and music. When I read this study, I knew that I had to do something. For theatre and dance, it's alright but when I read about music, it's catastrophic. Here in Luxembourg when you look at the programming from jazz clubs, four fifths are men and only one fifth are women. At the same time, there was also a French study (Study on inequalities between women and men (F/M) and on sexist and sexual violence (SSW) in jazz and improvised music) with focus on gender with the same results. So, I took the idea from my wife and I told her I need to do something.

I'll be honest, I don't know much about the Luxembourg jazz scene...

That's normal!

You have an extensive portfolio and have been a jazz photographer for about 45 years, had you been noticing the lack of women?

I didn't think about it before but there is a very good evolution at the moment. No one spoke about women, and I didn't pay attention to it, but now I see. I also see that when we talk about women in jazz

Guy Fonck
Photo by Mary Janssen



Dorothy Donegan, 1981, Nice
Photo by Guy Fonck



and when I look at my pictures, I always find singers. Obviously, nothing against female singers! But looking at all the other instruments is really a catastrophe. If you are a singer, other people take you seriously, but female drummers? You have men that say, mmm, can she do the work? I find that ridiculous.

I love the way that you sectioned the book into different sections (Brass, Conductors, Strings etc.) What made you decide to approach the layout that way?

I didn't want to go in chronological order, and I thought this way would work, showing that women do different instruments and that it would be a better platform for them, to show that there are women in all the domains of jazz.

I don't think I know any other jazz photography books that include dancers, and it was so refreshing to see a section on dancers in your book, reminiscent of the times of the great swing bands and the importance of dance in the jazz scene. What led you to include dancers?

I think that the spirit of jazz isn't limited, and I wanted to show it with dancers and also world musicians. I think if there is one music where you have everything, that's jazz. I only had a few photos of dancers, but I thought it was important to include them.

It is so good to be reminded of the great swing bands and how dance was so integral to the scene.

In this book I have Dorothy Donegan. She comes from the swing time and played great piano and boogie woogie but she also was a great entertainer. You could see that in shows where you had dancers and it was a period when jazz was really popular.

I had the chance to photograph her two times. I was very impressed with her be-

cause many people say she was a wonderful pianist, but she was also an entertainer - and you can combine both - and it was a very early concept. I was very young when I first photographed her in Luxembourg, and she played with me when I was taking the photos. I always looked up because the stage was high, I looked up to take my pictures. I have a good souvenir because when I stopped taking photos, she asked the public if I had disappeared, so it was something personal with her. And then three years ago I saw her in Nice, and she was very well dressed, and it was a great concert, very different from the first time. I was 18 when I took the first picture.

That's wonderful to see that journey. It was great to see the range of artists you've included - some legendary women in there (Melba Liston, Dorothy Donegan, Carmen McRae) but also some contemporary and emerging artists. Can you talk me through some of the photos you selected?

With Lakecia Benjamin it was just a really great concert and she is a really great instrumentalist. Her live performance is very, very special. So much energy and she's so positive. Audiences in Luxembourg, they don't want to participate but with Lakecia Benjamin, in Luxembourg, she got the public to participate!

And there's another thing. I've been making jazz photos for 45 years and I have had to deal with the technical problems of analogue photography photos. The one with Lakecia Benjamin shows that now technically you can do things that were impossible in the early years. But now with photo editing you can do things that I think technically produce better photos and I wanted to show this. I think it's a great photo of a great musician.

You have really captured her amazing energy, such an amazing shot. Now, female trombonists seem to be quite rare, and I was so glad to see the mighty Melba Liston and Nabou Claerhout in your book.

I saw some trombonists in your magazine that I didn't know, and I was glad to see other female trombonists too! I didn't know Nabou Claerhout until I saw her in this concert. She's very young and was presenting her first album. She's a great musician -and also the expression she had when I took photos!

Oh yes, it's another great moment captured. So many photos to explore, but let's look at just one more...Carla Bley.

During my early years I didn't see many women in jazz that weren't vocalists and who were relatively popular, and I really liked Carla Bley, an exceptional musician. I studied biology in France, and I had the chance to see her there with her big band, in the 80s when she worked with ECM. I saw her live with a big band and I was allowed to take pictures because it is not always allowed in big concert halls. I was so impressed with her and then at seeing her here in Luxembourg, obviously she was older but her aura... it was so good.

I mentioned earlier that I don't know much about the Luxembourg jazz scene and another fantastic element to this book is you are raising the profile of the jazz scene in Luxembourg and the musicians that come from there.

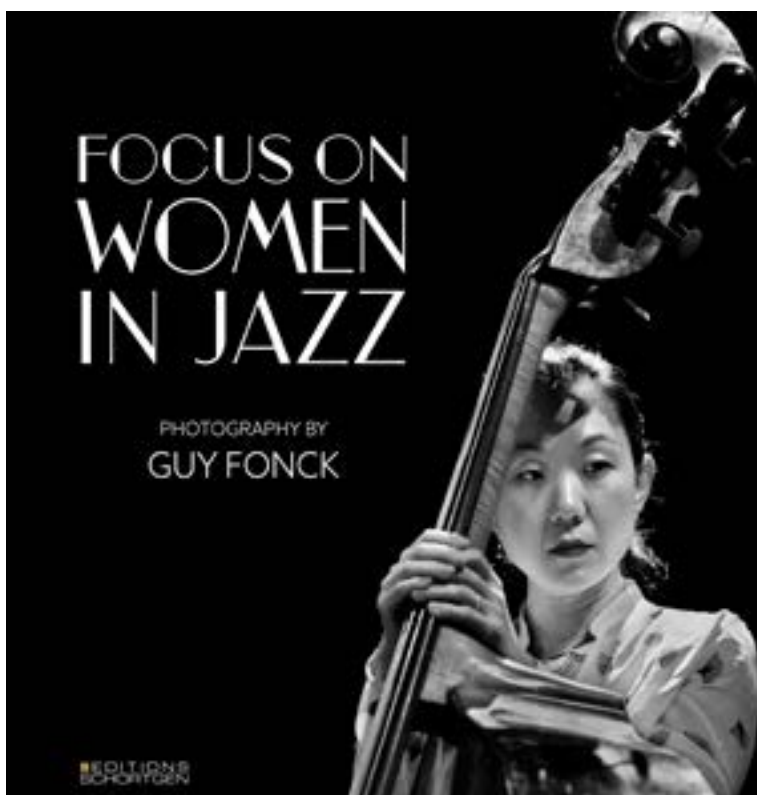
It's important for me because I saw the whole evolution of jazz in Luxembourg. When I first began taking photos, the Luxembourg jazz scene was only made of amateur musicians. But now at the Luxembourg Conservatory you can learn jazz and there are now so many good Luxembourg musicians, and we have a jazz scene that is equal to others. Therefore, I wanted to show Luxembourgish musicians in the book.

All the photos I've seen of yours are black and white, which I love. Thinking about the legacy of jazz and the legendary jazz photographers, what is it about black and white that you love?

There are many reasons. My father was a photographer and a painter and I received my first camera when I was eight years old. So, it started with a click - Agfa Click was the name of the camera. I was often with my father in the darkroom, and he always made black and white pictures. The first live concerts I could go to when I was 16, I was only allowed to go to this concert because a friend of our family, Raymond Clement, a renowned jazz photographer was taking photos, black and white, and I was very influenced by him.

Guy's book is published by Editions Schortgen and available to purchase! [Click here or on the book cover](#)

[Guy Fonck website click here](#)



Lakecia Benjamin,
Dudelange, 2023
Photo by Guy Fonck





Nabou Claerhout
2022 Dudelange
by Guy Fonck



Carla Bley
Salle Poirel
1984

Photo by Guy Fonck







A photograph of a woman from the waist up, wearing a sleeveless, shimmering, sequined dress. She is standing in front of a large, vertical, shimmering curtain made of many small, round, reflective beads. The lighting is warm and soft, creating a bokeh effect with the beads. The woman's face is partially visible on the left side of the frame.

LAILA BIALI

Photo by Chris Nicholls



Photo by Chris Nicholls

LAILA BIALI

AND FINDING THE BEAUTY IN WINTER

Multi award-winning Canadian singer-songwriter, pianist and CBC Music national radio host Laila Biali is an inspiration to many people across the world. Not just because of her astounding live performances, her incredible portfolio of songs or her fantastic radio show, but because embedded in all those elements of her work she demonstrates a level of depth, warmth, integrity and truth that is rare to see. Her authenticity radiates through her music, her radio show and indeed in everything she does.

Laila has recently released her tenth album as a bandleader, ***Wintersongs***, a stunning collection of material written while she was surrounded by snow-capped mountains in Banff, during a writing retreat right in the heart of Canada's Rocky Mountains. Described as her 'musical love letter to winter', the album is simply glorious and demonstrates, again, her astounding mastery of storytelling and her ability to communicate beauty.

A tenth album feels significant as a milestone in any artist's career, but Laila has shown herself to be a prolific songwriter, continually releasing refreshing new and inspired material. I asked her how she felt about this ten-album milestone.

Well, like anybody I love round numbers! It does feel like a milestone per se. But that said, things have changed so much in terms of album release cycles and in my opinion we're now in a time of shorter cycles, albums that are perhaps not as meaty or as

long, leaning more towards EP length versus a full length album and Wintersongs sits somewhere in the middle. But it is something that I've discussed a lot with fellow artists.

It's sort of quantity versus quality, however what is so interesting is if you look back to what we might call the golden age of jazz, in the 60s, major label artists were turning out music very quickly. For me, I've always felt that releasing an album every couple of years was a healthy cycle. So, when I think about this being my 10th album, I also think of my age and how long I've been out in the field so to speak. I believe I was 25 when I released my first record and so it's basically been 20 years! I guess it begs the question - how many more will I release? I don't know what the marker is in terms of the long term path - do I have 10 more in me? 20 more in me? I have no idea! So, I think I have to really embrace that number for what it is and celebrate it, because we don't actually know what the future will hold.

Laila's ten (so far!) albums have given listeners a beautifully diverse and inspirational range of music, which is a huge testimony to her mastery as a songwriter and performer. She seems to continually be able to create new, fresh and exciting ideas that connect with audiences across the world. An incredibly astute businesswoman, releasing albums roughly every two years, I asked Laila if that regularity was driven by the business side of being an artist and the perceived need to continually release music, or the creative side and just going with the

flow of the heart and mind.

It is a bit of both. It's interesting because on a heart level, it's all about the artistry. In terms of my brain and strategy, I think about the business side of things, algorithms, editorial playlists and all the things that are market drivers - but these things shouldn't be artistic drivers. I find that we're all having to deal with that tension.

Wintersongs was technically ready to go and be released last year (although I would have had to get it done and across the finish line), but it was actually Nicky Schrire who suggested I pause. Nicky said you just released an album (Your Requests) - and I love how she put it - she said let people miss you! Let them crave more of you after they have had some time to digest and live with your latest releases and frankly your catalogue of work.

I was fascinated by what happened with Taylor Swift who arguably is the queen of streaming platforms. She's incredibly smart business wise and frankly I think she's a good songwriter. Stylistic preferences aside, I think she's a good tunesmith and yes, she is a pop culture phenomenon but also as a writer who is connecting with people and to me that has relevance. We need to look at that and evaluate why that is. When she released her most recent album that had 30 plus tracks, it was actually controversial and a number of folks were saying, is this now too much even for Taylor Swift? We are operating a lot of the time on streaming platforms and DSP's under the assumption that more is more, let's just keep pumping out music, let's get on those playlists, let's get to those new listeners and the algorithms will favour us etc, but you know the industry and even her diehard fans started to say, you know maybe this is too much. So, I think that's a consideration. I do also wonder if we're really focused on quantity and churning out material - does art in concept begin to suffer a little bit? Are these priorities beginning to shift?

Yes! I often discuss these issues and I've seen so many conversations in the jazz industry where people insistently criticise your Taylor Swifts and Ed Sheerans almost like commerciality is a dirty word. Whether you like their music or not, surely, we can learn from their careers and achievements?

Agreed! And on the heels of the US election, I have been listening to many experts and they are deconstructing Kamala's campaign, the democratic party's campaign, where did they miss the mark and what happened. I mean of course policies matter, but when you talk about trying to reach new demographics of voters etc, especially younger people, the campaign matters hugely. And they spoke to the fact that Donald Trump for example, utilised more modern tools, that in a way, matter more now. Using Podcasts and social media (like it or not) to really mobilise new voters and new support - he was showing up in their feeds and this is astounding to me that it almost didn't matter what the content was, it was more that he was just there. So, I think about that as a jazz artist of a certain age. I can't even bother with TikTok. I don't want any part of it.

Don't get me started on TikTok! The conversations I have had about that...

Let me give you a little titbit that I don't know if I've shared in any interview, because it feels like it was part of a very special and kind of private conversation. This guy, a leader behind the scenes in music, Ken Druker (senior vice president of jazz development at Verve Label) was very, very kind to speak with me a few years ago. And you know I was curious to know his thoughts on the industry and his thoughts on my music and so on, and he was really generous and so kind, but one of the very first things he said was... it's all on TikTok.

Photo by Chris Nicholls



Lailia and I then had a fascinating conversation exploring TikTok, the pressure on artists to stay authentic, the reality of the type of content that the younger generation find on social media, - but I am saving that for a second article!

Laila's new album is a truly stunning collection of winter inspired songs, created while on an incredible two week writing retreat at Alberta's Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity.

I would describe my writing residency at the Banff centre Alberta as almost like a honeymoon. I've never been a huge winter person, and I married someone who's from Vermont and who was a competitive skier growing up, and both my husband and my son, they just love winter, they cannot wait for winter! In Vancouver we didn't get much winter, it would be damp and cold and that wasn't particularly magical. Then I moved east and it always just felt very harsh to me and messy - you might enjoy a beautiful first snowfall but after that it was just grey dirty mounds of snow and slush pushed to the sides of the roads and it felt treacherous trying not to slip on the ice. So, for me life moved really indoors and I do love being outdoors, so in some ways, I didn't like to be stuck indoors and felt almost like trapped. But then over time and especially through the pandemic I really got to watch and enjoy the joy winter brought my family, and so we began to look for beautiful places within a couple of hours' drive, somewhere we could really experience a Canadian winter in a new way. I found myself really opening up to the season and began to enjoy it.

I actually went to Banff with a completely different agenda, with a different project in mind. I had wanted to collaborate with this incredible young indigenous poet Hannah Gray McKay and set her words to music, but when I found myself in that incredible writing cabin, which was surrounded by the woods and mountains, I was just utterly captivated by the winter scene. In the

course of my time there I fell in love with winter. I bought these cleats to put on your shoes and I was out hiking for two hours in -26 degree weather. I just fully entered the winter experience and fell in love. It was out of that space that the music was born. I didn't expect it and it came very quickly. Every song felt almost like I was downloading them from the cloud. I had this gorgeous Rosewood Steinway piano with the most exquisite sound and these floor-to-ceiling glass windows, and I would get to enjoy how the scenes looked throughout the day, from sunrise to sunset, and it was almost like I was musically scripting what I was looking at.

The album has nine exquisite songs with an incredible personnel including the Venuti String Quartet, Jane Bunnett, a chamber orchestra with renowned orchestrator Rob Mathes on string orchestrations and conducting. It is truly astounding to hear how the album captures the picturesque Rocky Mountains and transports you right into the landscape.

The album was written practically in the order that the songs are on the album, 'Drifting Through Ice' was the very first thing I wrote - the snow was falling and I wanted to write a soundtrack of sorts of what I was seeing. 'Rocky Mountain Lullaby' was a very early morning and I would wake up frequently before the sun rose, and I would watch it come up from behind the mountains. And because the mountains are so tall, the sunrise was so slow and gentle and it would start off as this warm glow, and then over the course of 30 minutes to 60 minutes I would watch it increasing in intensity, and then finally the sun would be up in all its glory and it was really remarkable. It felt so cinematic.

Isolated in her beautiful writing space, the Banff Centre also offered conferences across multiple fields where Laila would be thrust into a populated space. Laila often found herself at a table which was also a source of stimulation artistically, the conversations and those interactions Laila describes as

having 'a beautiful ebb and flow and that is the brilliance of Banff Centre'.

With this 10 album milestone and such an incredible portfolio of exhilarating work, I asked Laila about her approach for this album, as a writer and how it differed to previous albums.

*Banff really is my creative home, and I wrote the material for **House with Many Rooms** and **Out of Dust** and now **Wintersongs** when I was at Banff. Whether it was for several days or in the case of **Wintersongs**, 2 weeks - and that was by far the longest residency I've ever enjoyed - the process was different. When I was there for a very concentrated period of time, for example 3 days, I really pushed myself to be at the instrument actively writing for long stretches. I only had so much time, so I had to be committed to the process. But with **Wintersongs**, because it was this beautiful stretch of time, the amount of time I spent at the piano, writing and working on*

these songs was actually much less. What I liked about that process was it meant that I would write for an hour or two and rather than pushing myself I would go for a 2-3 hour long hike and what I found was those spaces in between the active writing sessions allowed the music and the creative ideas to kind of marinade and steep. I found myself making unpressured decisions, creative decisions about the music when I was away from the piano and in the spaces in between. So, I really learned that the work of songwriting and crafting new material isn't just happening when you're at your instrument or in the writing room so to speak, it is happening in the spaces in between those writing sessions, and that that was a bit of an epiphany for me. I initially carried some guilt about that. I'm in Banff and I've been gifted this incredible residency and I'm out hiking, squandering the time that I've been given, but I realised that it really served the music. The spaces in between are every bit as important as the actual active writing session.

Wintersongs truly highlights Laila's mastery at storytelling. The way she illustrates the beauty and harshness of winter is quite simply breathtaking. You can hear and feel nature.

Feeling the piano, which is both a stringed instrument and percussion instrument, there is such a range of textures and flavours harmonically and to me there is music in nature if you listen for it. Drawing that line from the visual and sensory experience of nature to the musical expression to underpin or intermingle with that, felt very natural to me and very organic. The idea of a piano as an orchestra was integral. The idea that music can really be visual... to me there is a direct connection to the imagination, so I was lucky to be looking out at nature and I love that you say you can hear nature. It's like my brain was trying to connect the visual content straight to the piano and the strings and all the other elements that were enhanced by other people, and if I could use one word to describe the album it would be 'atmospheric'.

I've always been fascinated by how music, whatever the instrument, can elucidate a storyline and in a way, I would say that my years of arranging the music of others helped position me to create the album Wintersongs, where I wanted to tell a story regardless of whether there were lyrics or not. So when I arranged Autumn Leaves 'For Your Requests' it's a little bit literal, but I knew that I wanted to create an arrangement where you could just see those leaves swirling around and falling softly as I was playing these cascading piano lines. There are ways that I think, speaking as a writer and as a performer, that when you're delivering a lyric or a line, it translates - it's about intention.

Laila Biali is an artist who finds beauty in her surroundings and shares that beauty with us all. She brings something to the world that we all need, a reminder that there is joy, kindness and beauty everywhere we go.

[Click here to visit Laila Biali website](#)





Photo by Chris Nicholls



JANE CORNWELL

Women in
Australian Jazz



AUDREY POWNE



Photo by Bianca Milani



WOMEN IN AUSTRALIAN JAZZ: AUDREY POWNE BY JANE CORNWELL

“At what point did I feel that being female, I would have to work harder and smarter if I wanted to make jazz my career?” Rising star Audrey Powne - trumpeter, vocalist, keyboardist, composer, lyricist and bandleader - doesn't hesitate. “Honestly, from Day One! I had gone through university and was just starting my career when the #metoo movement took off. I knew very well how challenging it was to be taken seriously, and be accepted socially, by many of my male peers.”

In Melbourne, Australia, where the 30-something Powne grew up, even her university lecturer told her that she'd have to work twice as hard as her male counterparts, just to get to the point they started from. Getting gigs proved tricky: “The jazz scene in Australia is really informal,” says the multit talented Powne, who moved to London - the home of her UK label BBE - in early 2024. She launched her acclaimed solo debut *From the Fire* at Ronnie Scotts in October, played the Albany Theatre for the EFG London Jazz Festival in November, and was this month nominated for the Australian Music Prize on a shortlist of albums that included Nick Cave's *Wild God* and Walmatjarri elder and blues musician Kankawa Nagarra's *Wirlmani* (the winner).

“Most bookings in Australia are mates booking mates,” she continues. “I felt I wasn't considered for a lot of gigs because most ensembles were all male and kept that way for social reasons.”

Undeterred, driven by a love of jazz variously born of watching MGM musicals and singing the American Songbook with her mum in Sassafras, an leafy outer eastern

suburb of Melbourne, and by happening upon Roy Hargrove's 2003 *Hard Groove* album as a teenager (“I transcribed all the trumpet parts”), and bolstered by the support of a high school music teacher, established saxophonist Tony Hicks (“Tony taught me how to improvise and importantly, how to work hard”), Powne persevered.

She found a mentor in trailblazing Melbourne trombonist/composer Shannon Barnett, a former Young Australian Jazz Artist of the Year who is now a professor of jazz trombone in Cologne, Germany and the recipient of the 2022 German Jazz Prize in brass instruments. “Meeting Shannon and watching her play when I was young was invaluable. She was living the life I wanted to live, doing the gigs I wanted to do. I'm not sure I would have got through those first difficult years on the scene otherwise. Shannon is a great friend and remains a constant inspiration.”

After graduating in 2012 with an honours degree in music from Monash University (this writer's alma mater), Powne - who produced and wrote all of *From the Fire* - taught music in tertiary institutions. The jazz courses she helmed remained overwhelmingly male: **“There is an incredible new generation of young players in Australian jazz and many of them are female, which is exciting,”** she says. “But things are still extraordinarily dominated by male students and women, particularly vocalists, still struggle to be respected by their [male] peers.”



"That said, [women are making a huge mark on the scene](#) because they really do have to be brilliant to cut through the bias towards male musicians. This is what cultivated my own determined work ethic," continues Powne, who has been a frontwoman for soul band The Leisure Centre, one half of the electronic duo Au Dré and a member of all-female improvising jazz quartet Aura. In 2018 she performed with Maceo Parker at the Melbourne International Jazz Festival, and in 2019 moved to New York, from where she toured with Grammy-nominated blues-rock siblings The Teskey Brothers.

She also took part in recording the 2019 Brownswood compilation *Sunny Side-Up*, a follow-up to 2017's *We Out Here*, a game-changing collection of tracks recorded at Dalston's Total Refreshment Centre that kickstarted the hype around the so-called young London jazz scene. *Sunny Side-Up* was its Melbourne equivalent, a snapshot of a fe-

fecund young jazz community tucked away at house parties, deploying sounds strafed with disco, funk and the sounds of DJ culture, welcoming trained and untrained players, [bringing a new female audience to jazz along the way](#). The album - and the added cachet of Brownswood label boss, tastemaker and broadcaster Giles Peterson - gave Powne (and her great friend, soul-blues singer/keys player Allysha-Joy) a cred-wrapped seal of approval.

When I put this to Powne, she laughs good naturedly. "Yeah, the Giles thing had a big impact," she says. "I'm eternally grateful for his continued genuine support for my original music. But Australian jazz has been thriving for way longer than has been recognised internationally. When I was coming up there were world-class trumpeters including Phil Slater, Eugene Ball and Scott Tinkler who graciously shared their knowledge and supported me. Pianist Barney McCall was also a huge creative



Photo by Monika S Jakubowska

influence.

"I hope that alongside this young generation of Australian jazz artists" - among them, First Nations singer/composer Bumpy and flautist Erica Tucceri, who led the 2024 Melbourne International Jazz Festival's gender-parity initiative, Take Note - "we recognise the generation before us. I believe that knowledge is power and I'm here because of what I gained in my education from excellent teachers."

From the Fire is a cinematic marvel, journeying through ambient soul, hip hop grooves, multitracked vocals and lush, swelling strings, folding in soaring trumpet solos, freewheeling organ passages and two interludes that give pause for reflection and regrouping. Powne's lyrics traverse everything from climate change and the devastating 2019 bushfires in Victoria to re-generation and re-birth of the earth and self, touching on trauma, lucid dreaming and hope along the way. There's a freedom in creating jazz in Australia, says Powne, a place far removed from European and American traditions: "We filter these traditions in a way that includes our geography, diversity, spontaneity and humour."

"We may be inspired by Black American art music labelled, not uncontroversially, as 'jazz'," she says, "and while it is vital that the history and legacy of the music is treated with a deep respect, it is not our story. We owe that community the space and platforms to speak on its legacy and significance."

"As an Australian I can only attempt to be honest and authentic. I learned to improvise by transcribing the greats of jazz - Miles, Coltrane, Wayne Shorter - but all this was filtered through a music education on the other side of the world ... Which is what I believe makes Australian jazz unique."

Like Powne, the South Korean-born, Melbourne-based vocalist and experimentalist Sunny Kim is currently reshaping what jazz means, using acoustic and processed

sounds to explore culture, identity and connection. "I think Melbourne is unique in its openness to experimentation and willingness to blur the lines between genres," she told me when I spoke to her on the eve of the MIJF.

"Jazz here has become more approachable for audiences who may once have found it unfamiliar or intimidating and who are interested in how it intersects with other sounds, be it Indigenous music or electronic or classical influences."

What isn't changing fast enough is jazz education, says Powne, whose mother taught in state schools. Just as the arts in the UK are generally practiced by the upper and middle classes (the entry given by fabled training programmes such as Tomorrow's Warriors, Youthsayers and Kinetika aside), so too are those in Australia. In a scarcity-fuelled climate where music education is being dropped from schools across both countries, systematic change is urgently needed.

"There is a big divide in education in Australia between public (government) and private schools particularly regarding music education, and I know from teaching in both public and private of the huge discrepancies in quality and opportunities."

Powne was lucky enough to attend a public (government) school that had aforementioned saxophonist Tony Hicks as a music teacher. "But funding for music lessons in public schools is being decimated as they struggle with tightening budgets, and individual music lessons are becoming inaccessible to lower income students."

"We need to ensure that arts education is available to all students regardless of their socio-economic status for the sake of our art and our cultural identity as a nation. The arts are already becoming a career option only available to those from wealthy backgrounds."

Lobbying for equal opportunities in the arts is one of Powne's passions, ranking way above such jazz-related concerns as the need to promote oneself on social media. "That is so exhausting, and really challenging from a mental health standpoint for myself and colloquially many other artists," she says. "Body image and aesthetics play a really big role [in jazz], particularly for female artists, and I feel this pressure to look cool and pretty, especially on social media."

"As I get older I'm also feeling this pressure to stay relevant, and social media apps are not designed to champion the kind of long form, conceptual music I make so it's challenging to navigate how to utilise that as a promotional tool. You also get a lot of unsolicited input on what you should or shouldn't post which I sometimes find difficult to stomach."

While she would prefer, of course, to concentrate on her music, she understood from the get-go how difficult it is to make a living purely from playing. "I'm grateful that I learned pretty early on that the

more strings to your bow the more you can scramble together a wide variety of gigs that will pay the bills. I just think as an artist, the more you understand music holistically from a production point of view, the better you'll communicate with your colleagues, and everybody benefits."

Powne will be back touring with the Teskey Brothers for the first three months of 2025, before heading over to the Blue Note in Japan to play a double bill with Allysha Joy. There'll be headline shows in New York and Los Angeles, and probably - once she's back in London in April - a headline show in the UK capital in May. And beyond that? "My ultimate dream is playing a concert with my jazz quarter, a small orchestra and a full orchestra for which I've done all the arrangements."

"It's a fun fantasy," she smiles, "that I'm currently manifesting."



Photo by Monika S Jakubowska

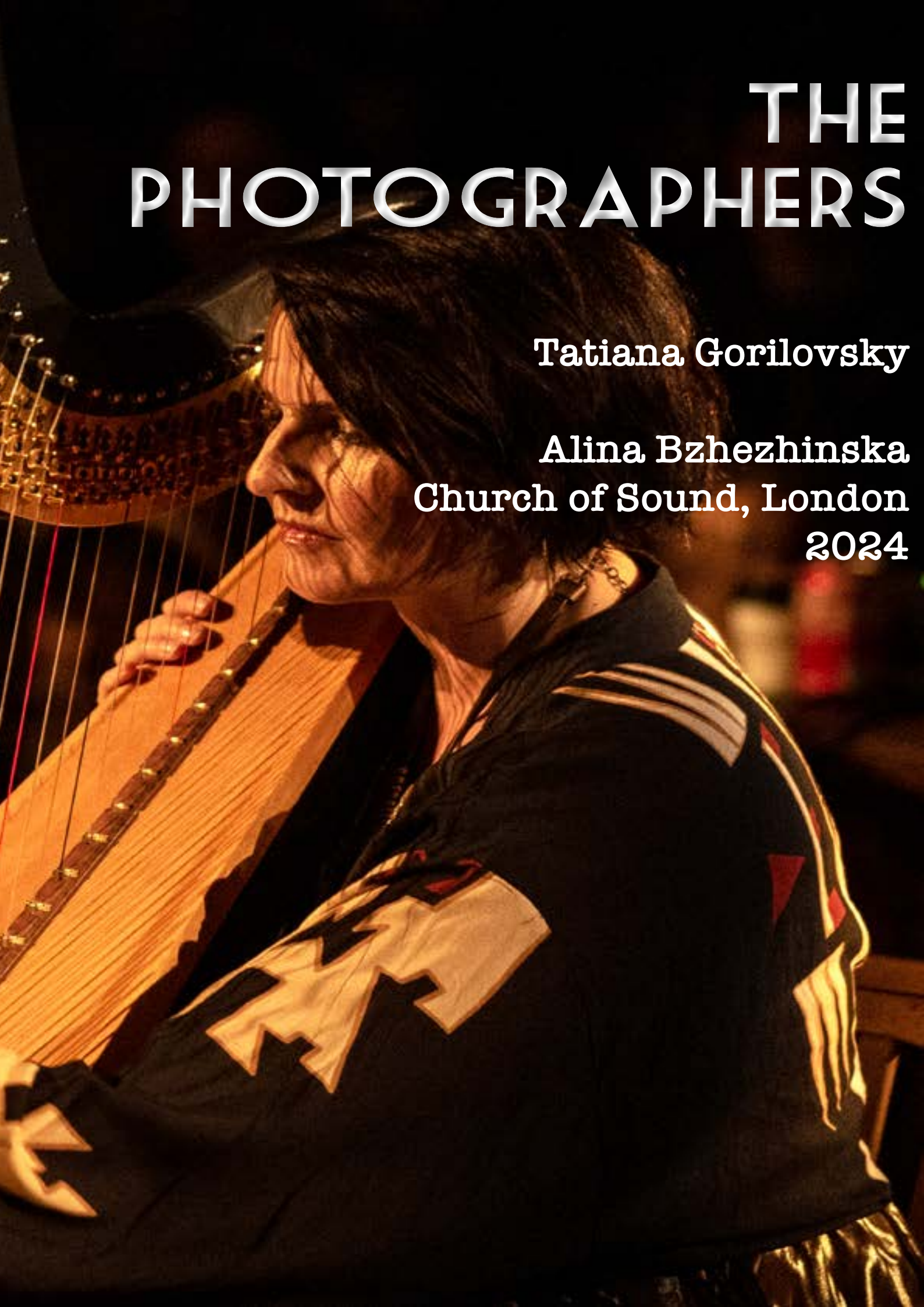


[Audrey Powne website click here](#)

[Jane Cornwell website click here](#)



THE PHOTOGRAPHERS

A woman with dark hair is shown in profile, playing a large wooden harp. She is wearing a dark jacket with white and red stripes on the sleeves. The background is dark and out of focus, suggesting an indoor setting with warm lighting.

Tatiana Gorilovsky

Alina Bzhezhska
Church of Sound, London
2024



Tatiana Gorilovsky

Carmen Lundy
Royal Festival Hall,
London
2024





Tatiana Gorilovsky

Charlotte Keeffe
Toulouse Lautrec,
2024





Tatiana Gorilovsky

Cherise
Royal Festival Hall,
London
2024





Tatiana Gorilovsky

Marisa Monte
Royal Festival Hall,
London
2024



Tatiana Gorilovsky

Moments Notice
Union Chapel,
London
2024

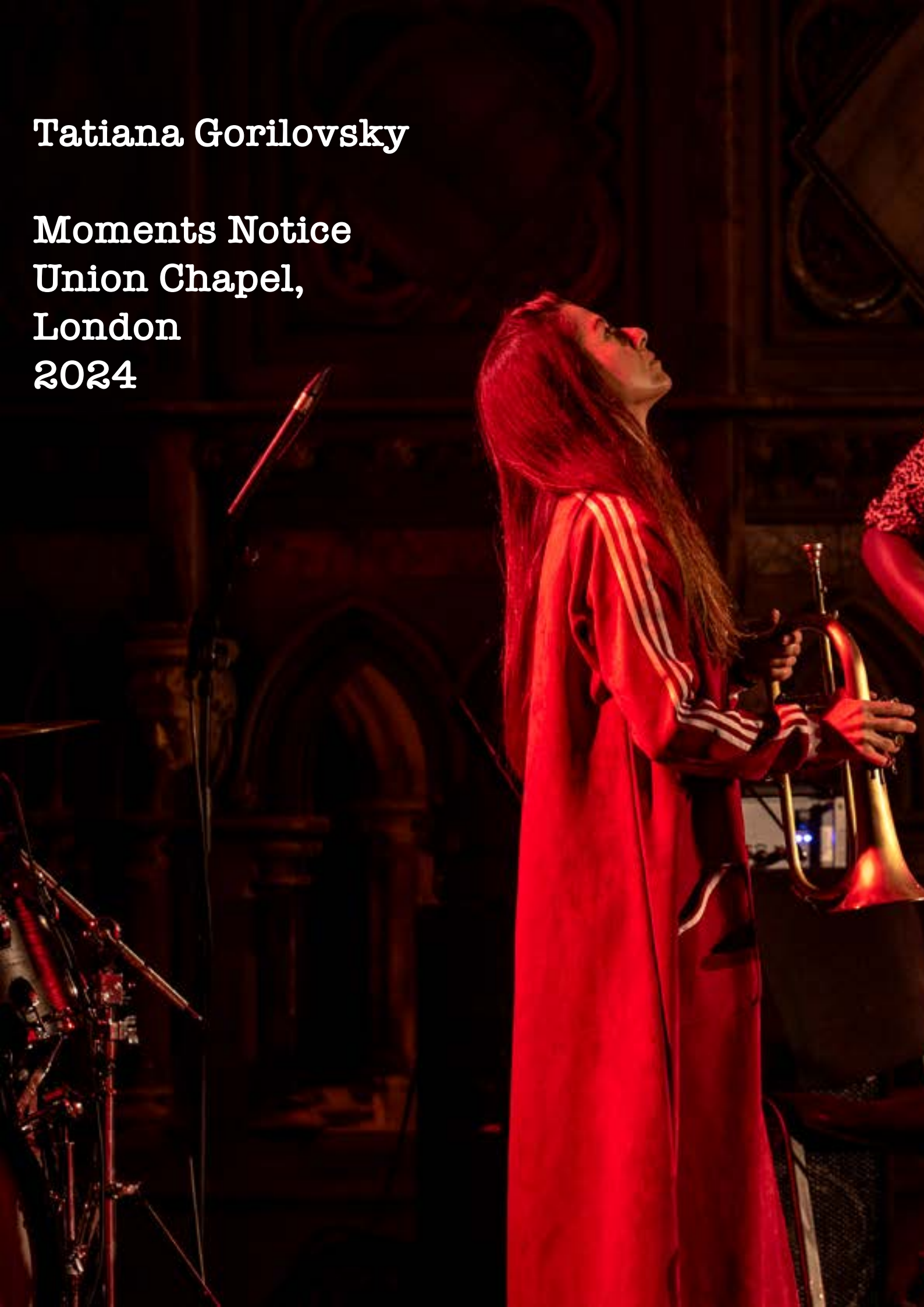






Photo provided by Hilary Seabrook

HILARY SEABROOK AND HER HARMONIOUS WORLD

Writer, musician and podcaster Hilary Seabrook has been sharing her voice on a range of platforms for many years. As a journalist she regularly reviews live performance in London for publications including Kind of Jazz and The Riff, along with her Substack portfolio and blog. Her podcast Harmonious World has seen an incredible range of guests including Laila Biali, Kim Cypher, Sharon Isbin, Darius Brubeck, China Moses, Joey Alexander, Christian McBride and Maria Schneider, to name a tiny few. With over 200 episodes now recorded, we thought it was the perfect opportunity to catch up with Hilary and find out more about her work.

You are a writer, musician and podcaster and on your website you talk about 'number of career twists and turns'. Can you tell us a little bit about your career journey so far and where you are focussing now?

It's never simple to know where to start with the vagaries of freelance work, but I've been freelance since I graduated from the University of London in 1984. My musical career began while I was still at school, playing in big bands and occasionally in the baritone sax chair for NYJO through the early 1980s. While at university, I moved on to several of the London big bands and I was a founder member of the Fairer Sax sax quartet. I even had a brief stint, touring Europe, with the fantastic Loose Tubes.

So, graduating with a joint Music and English degree opened lots of doors and since then (how is it 40 years?) I've made a living combining the two disciplines. I love the process of writing - except about myself - and especially when talking about music. I've worked for a lot of major UK and International businesses in internal communications and still do so, alongside part-time teaching and all that music offers.

I'm particularly keen on writing about and for younger people. One of my key areas of focus for 2025 is to interview new, young artists on Harmonious World and to make the podcast more attractive for a younger audience.

You work as a journalist for a range of publications. Can you tell us about these publications and your areas of interest?

I began blogging under my own name in 2011 and still enjoy that. I also write for KindofJazz.com and The Riff online jazz magazine. My focus is definitely on writing about music - mainly, but not exclusively jazz - and spreading the word about how much fabulous creativity there is in the musical sphere. My 'business' clients mainly employ me to write for their internal communications, so it's a shame that I can't share that work, because it covers a huge range of topics: the best thing is introducing

employees at all levels. On any one day, I can be chatting with a new, junior employee about their experiences or a particular project and the next it could be interviewing a CEO about the business strategy! Every time I write, I'm trying to shed light on how people do what they do, what motivates them: I'm fascinated by people who find their areas of creativity, strength and competences.

Are there any artists you have recently reviewed that you would like to shout out?

Honestly, it's almost impossible to single out a particular artist: each one has been interesting and inspirational in their own way. I never end a conversation and wonder how I'll turn that into an episode or an article. I guess some of the biggest names over the last four years have been Maria Schneider, Christian McBride, Bill Laurance, Kim Cypher and Laila Biali (third episode just a few weeks ago). I have some VERY exciting new episodes in the bag, including with Rosie Frater-Taylor and Emma Rawicz, which is a great way to end this year and begin the next.

Did we see that you are publishing a novel soon? Please do tell us about this!

Yes, my first novel is on its way. It's a re-imagining of a particularly unpleasant episode of my life: it ended well, and even more so if the novel ends up being read by a few people! I'm also working on a new short story project, which will be published on Substack.

You have published over 200 episodes of your podcast 'Harmonious World', which is incredible. Why did you decide to start recording podcasts?

Actually, it's now nearly 250 episodes and I'm delighted that number 250 is a special one with guitarist Rosie Frater-Taylor.

Harmonious World began as a Covid-19 pandemic project - I had been broadcasting on our local radio station, which was sadly a casualty of the first lockdown in March 2020. The two shows I did for North Herts FM had given me a lot of great contacts and I spoke to one of the PR experts from the States - Amanda Bloom at Cross-over Media - and she was able to guide me through starting the podcast process. It was a perfect combination of chatting with people and listening to music that has always driven me.

The title of your podcast was inspired by a quote from the legendary Quincy Jones, who very sadly has recently passed. Can you tell us about this quote and how it spoke to you?

Having decided to start a podcast, I realised that the name was important and I wanted it to be something with an international flavour, so I just did a lot of searching online and found the Q quote. I saw him just once, in September 2014, when he visited London's Royal College of Music and I heard some of his music (which had always fascinated me) and heard him speak about his life. It felt like starting my podcast was a bit of a tribute to him - he was a polyglot and seemed so fascinated by people and their stories, wherever they came from. Harmonious World was born!

With many amazing podcasts out there, how do you ensure your voice - and your guests - is heard? What do you think you bring to the podcasting world?

I'm fortunate that many of my guests help share their episode on emails, websites and social media and it's great that so many of them enjoy the interview and want to share it. I'm all over social media, although Instagram and Facebook definitely bring the most new listeners. One of the areas I'm beginning to explore more in 2025 is people who don't listen to podcasts: I've realised that saying "listen wherever you get your podcasts" doesn't help people who never have. It's all about



Hilary with Rosie Frater-Taylor at Love Supreme

Photo provided by Hilary Seabrook

Lucy-Anne Daniels at Ladbroke Grove, by Fiona Ross



making it easy for people to find me and then giving them something that is worth coming back for. The statistics are definitely on the way up, so long may that continue. I'm also offering some cute Harmonious World merchandise for subscribers - they can even get hold of one of the special keyrings that has been a gift for guests when I meet them in person.

You have had such a wide range of guests from across the world, how do you select your guests?

That's simple. I have to enjoy listening to their music. Not all great musicians make wonderful guests - very self-deprecating, some of them - but my job is to help them explain their creativity and what they do. If I can put them at ease and (hopefully) ask the right questions, the rest is straightforward for them.

Could you share with us some highlights of the wonderful conversations you have had?

It was a real joy to chat with Lucy Anne Daniels, after hearing her sing at Ladbroke Hall. She was one of the first musicians I approached directly at a gig and was an absolute pleasure to chat with her in a cafe at St Pancras! She is one to watch and I'd urge people to listen to her episode to find out more about what makes her tick. My first ever guest on Harmonious World in June 2020 was Laila Biali, and she's just clocked up her third episode. She's very interesting and seems to find it easy to explain her work as pianist, vocalist and composer.

One of my other favourite guests was the fabulous Emma Smith. I know her Mum and Dad, similarly with bassist Charlie Pyne. It is great to chart the progress of people where I know their musical background through their family.

I was particularly fortunate to get an interview with Maria Schnieder, soon after her summer 2020 release of 'Data Lords'. She's one of the real jazz greats of our gen

eration and I'd probably never have had that chance to speak to her without the global lockdown.

Who was your last guest and can you share anything about your podcast plans for next year?

As I write this, the most recent Harmonious World episode was a conversation with saxist and vocalist Kim Cypher. A couple of days ago, I chatted with Rosie Frater-Taylor and I've just been in email conversation with Emma Rawicz about booking a conversation for the New Year episode of Harmonious World. It's relentless and I hope it doesn't stop any time

[Click on the logo to go to the Harmonious World podcasts](#)

[Click here to visit Hilary's website](#)



Kim Cypher's album launch at Ronnie Scotts, by Monika S Jakubowksa



IRENE SERRA



Photo by Tatiana Gorilovsky

DEAR BRITAIN, HERE'S A TRIBUTE TO YOU...

FROM IRENE SERRA WITH LOVE.

BY GERMANA STELLA LA SORSA

At the risk of repeating myself, there's nothing more exciting for me than a jazz musician who pushes the edges of genre and style in order to truthfully express themselves. And it gives me such joy when this is done with courage and confidence, from the first to the last note, by an artist that doesn't want to be confined to a box and fully sings their heart out loud.

Italian singer **Irene Serra** is one of these artists and her latest release "The Great British Songbook" – featuring guitarist Luca Boscagin - is testament to her freedom of expression. The album - whose was launched on 2nd November at Café Posk in London – is a celebration of some of the most famous British musicians of the last 70 years and is out on Friday 29th of November.

Serra - who was longlisted for "Best Jazz Vocalist" at the 2022 Parliamentary Jazz Awards and was a finalist at the Shure Montreux Jazz Competition in 2009 - made a choice not to be artistically restrained by the definition of genres since her debut album with her original project ISQ (which was a 'Time Out Critics Choice' in 2015).

The singer started studying jazz at the age of 16 at the Academy of Music in Milan with renowned jazz vocalist Tiziana Ghighlioni; she then moved to London to continue studying music at Goldsmiths College and gained a distinction while completing her master's in music performance at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama.

Currently working on her 5th album of original music with ISQ (set to be released in the Autumn of 2025), Serra has worked her way up the UK jazz scene thanks to a "strong stage presence and a compelling vocal tone" (Jazzwise) and "sublime vocals" (Jazz FM), performing in world-class venues, including the Barbican with Wynton Marsalis and the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, Southbank Centre, Ronnie Scott's and Pizza Express Jazz Club, just to name but a few.

It is not by chance that for "The Great British Songbook", she teamed up with Luca Boscagin: an eclectic guitarist who grew up heavily influenced by rock & jazz and whom, during his career, has played with internationally renowned musicians of the stature of Jim Mullen and Ares Tavolazzi (from Italian prog rock band Area) and has recorded at major studios like Abbey Road and Real World.

What do the songs of the Beatles, Sting, Massive Attack and Imogen Heap have to do with jazz? Literally everything in the duo's arrangements of the tunes. Most importantly, in this meaningful album, there's a deeper message that goes even beyond music itself. And this makes it even more special and thoughtful.



Photo by Tatiana Gorilovsky

GSLS: “The Great British Songbook” celebrates some of the most important British singers and songwriters of the last 70 years. Where did this idea come from and how did you reimagine and arrange each song? Where does the inspiration come from?

IS: *I’ve always been a huge fan of British music. It’s amazing to think how much groundbreaking music has come from this small island, from The Beatles and The Rolling Stones to Pink Floyd, The Sex Pistols, and beyond. The idea for this project sparked from many late-night chats with Luca (my guitarist and long-time collaborator) about the music we love. We’d often play British pop tunes at gigs just for fun, and it clicked—we should build a project around it. So we got together, jammed, and “The Great British Songbook” was born.*

Our process was organic. We approached each song with a jazz mindset—taking the basic structure and reimagining it through paraphrasing, reharmonizing, and improvising. We loved blending the freedom of jazz with the familiarity of these British pop/rock tunes. It’s always rewarding to see the audience’s reaction when they recognize a familiar melody reinterpreted with a jazz twist—it bridges the gap between genres.

This project was also born in the aftermath of Brexit. For me, it became a love letter to British music—a celebration of everything that made me choose to make the UK my home. I’ve lived here for nearly 25 years, and while Brexit felt like a rejection of that connection, this project is a defiant embrace of the beautiful things that unite us—music being one of the most powerful.

GSLs: You've been working with guitarist Luca Boscagin for a while now. Tell us about this musical partnership and how did you both pick the songs for 'The Great British Songbook'.

IS: Luca and I have been playing together for over 15 years. We first met when I needed a guitarist for a Brazilian gig, and it was a serendipitous meeting! Funny enough, I had learned a lot of Brazilian tunes from a band I found on YouTube back in the day, and when we started rehearsing, I realised Luca was the guitarist in that very band! We clicked instantly, and the rest is history.

Choosing the repertoire for "The Great British Songbook" was a very democratic process. We both made a list of songs we loved, and it turned out we had a lot in common. We jammed through many of them, experimenting with different ideas until we found arrangements that felt fresh and captured the essence of both British pop and our jazz approach. We wanted a selection that represented a range of emotions and soundscapes, all tied together by our mutual love of improvisation and experimentation.

GSLs: What is your personal favourite track from the album and why?

IS: It's hard to choose, but I'd say "Every Little Thing She Does Is Magic" by The Police. Sting is one of my favourite songwriters, and this was the first track Luca and I rehearsed for the project. It came together so effortlessly and set the tone for the rest of the repertoire. The joy we had and the groove we found in performing it gave us a strong sense of direction for the album.

GSLs: As an eclectic singer who is well affirmed and respected in the jazz scene, releasing an album that's a tribute to pop tunes is a brave - wonderful! - choice (... and kudos to you for this!). Not all singers feel free to do so, worrying about what others could think. How do you deal with music preconceptions of genre and style?

Which advice would you give to someone who worries about these kind of stereotypes?

IS: I try not to let genre preconceptions define me. I made a decision early on not to limit myself artistically. My first album with ISQ was an original project, which wasn't the norm for vocalists at the time—most were expected to release a standards album. But I felt strongly about creating something that was true to my voice.

Sure, it may not have been the easiest path, but I firmly believe you should follow your instincts. If you stay true to yourself, the outcomes—whether good or bad—are easier to navigate because they're your's. My advice to anyone struggling with stereotypes is to remember that only you know what you want artistically, so don't shrink to fit into someone else's box.

GSLs: Who inspired you the most at the beginning of your career and which lessons would you share with someone who wants to undertake a musical path as a professional?

IS: My mom was my first inspiration. She wasn't a professional singer, but she had a beautiful natural voice and would sing Frank Sinatra and Mina around the house. Tiziana Ghiglioni, my jazz tutor during my teenage years in Italy, was another big influence. She's an incredible jazz vocalist and a true free spirit. She encouraged me to connect with my creativity above all else and was the one who pushed me to move to London, as building a full-time career as a jazz musician in Italy was tough.

The biggest lesson I'd share with aspiring musicians is that "talent" really comes down to dedication and hard work. That's what will give you longevity in this business.

GSLs: You've been performing around Italy and the UK for many years now. What is the gig or recording session that you cherish the most and why?

IS: Probably the first ISQ recording session for my debut album. Hearing songs I had written come to life with brilliant musicians was pure magic. It's one of those moments that stays with you— when the music in your head turns into something tangible and even better than you imagined. There is a particular joy and magic to hearing tunes that you have written coming to life.

GSLs: The music industry is constantly changing and musicians have more and more duties that go from promoting gigs to selling albums but also dealing with social media and content creation.

What do you think are the biggest issues nowadays for an artist and how do you cope with these?

IS: One of the biggest challenges is the sheer volume of work that falls outside of making music. We're not just artists anymore; we're also our own managers, content creators, promoters, and more. It can be overwhelming. I'm grateful to have my partner help with a lot of the admin side, but finding balance is always a challenge.

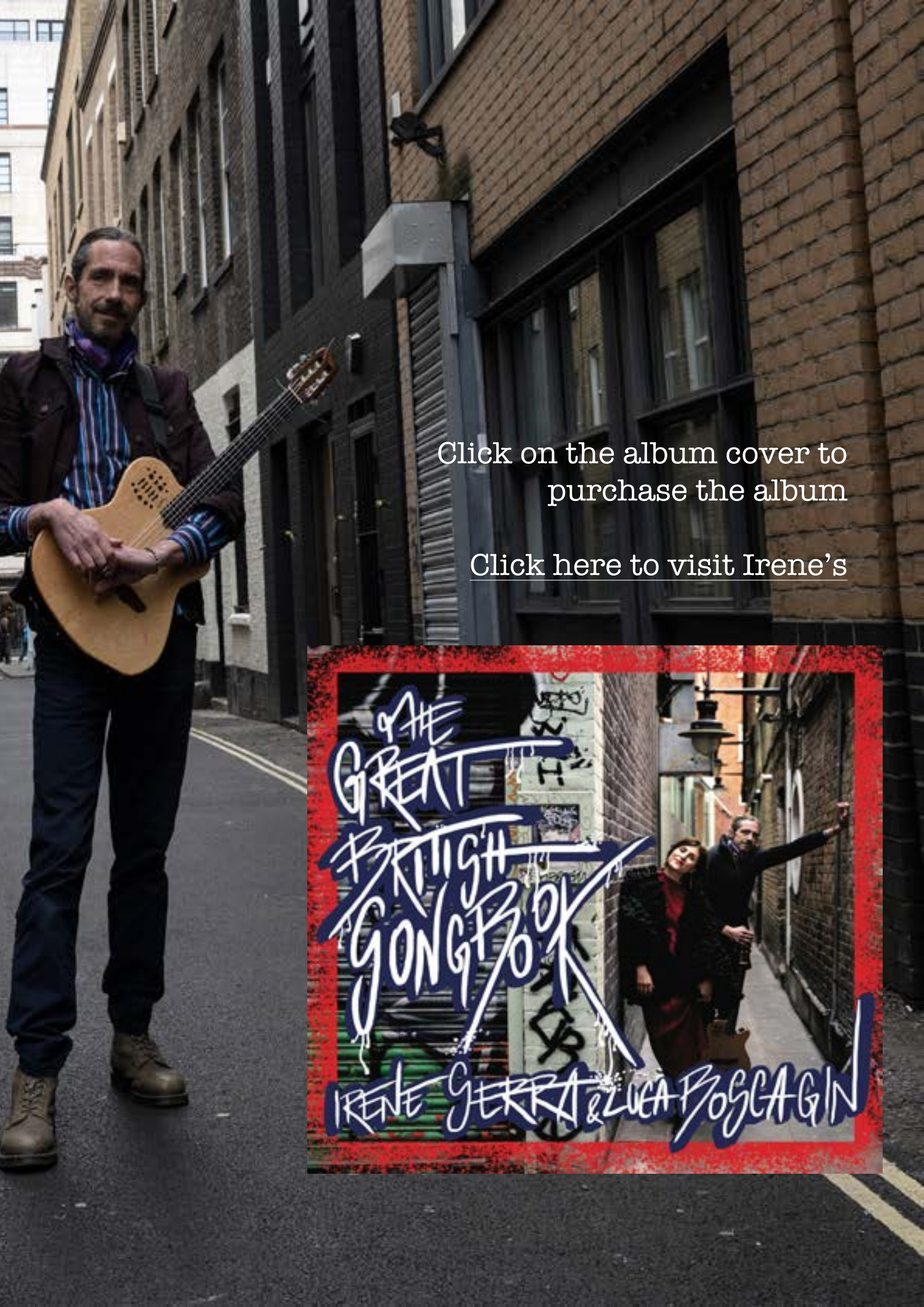
Scheduling everything in my calendar, including practice and writing time, is key for me. While social media can be a powerful tool for connecting with fans, I'm not sure the positives outweigh the negatives. I'm glad I grew up without it, as it gave me the time to focus purely on my craft at the beginning of my career.

I'm really lucky that my partner helps me out with a lot of the admin that comes with being a musician as I would never be able to sustain three different music projects without him. I try to use my time well and schedule all the things I have to do that week in my calendar, including practise/writing, which takes priority. As I said, really not easy to find the balance but organisation definitely helps!

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

IS: Well, for my "bucket list" the sky's the limit but I would love a headline gig at Ronnie Scotts to happen soon. I've been performing on the London jazz scene for almost twenty years so now I think it would be good timing! Next steps after the release is lining up dates with this project in the UK and Europe and recording the 5th ISQ album next year. No rest for the wicked, that's for sure.





Click on the album cover to
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THE LIFE & MUSIC OF EMILY REMLER

BY NICK LEA

Mention the name **Emily Remler** and chances are the response received will be that she is remembered as the promising young jazz guitarist who tragically died young. The truth, when revisiting her recorded legacy is somewhat different, but she was taken far too soon in circumstances that are all too familiar in the history of jazz. And a place in the history of the music is something that Emily so richly deserves.

While her discography remains slim and several of her all too few albums have fallen victim to the deletions axe, thanks to a new release from the Jazz Detective Zev Feldman and Resonance Records we have some new music to listen to and analyse. The album is the first new recording of Emily Remler for thirty four years, and brings together previously unheard tracks recorded live at the Four Queens with a quartet in May 1984 and a trio in September 1988. While not necessarily shedding any new light on Remler's remarkable talent, the new album will hopefully raise the guitarist's profile and music to a new generation of listeners.

Although not wishing to dwell too much on the darker side of the guitarist's life and persona, perhaps some brief biographical information would be useful before delving into Emily's recordings. Born on 18th September 1957 in Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey where she grew up, Emily's interest in music was sparked by her brother who played guitar and to which she was attracted. Taking up the instrument at the age of ten, her first guitar was her brother's Gibson ES-330, that would remain her preferred instrument until the late 1980s and

can be heard on most of her recordings, her initial exposure was to pop and rock musicians such as Jimi Hendrix.

In 1976 she enrolled at Berklee College of Music in Boston. It was when Emily arrived at Berklee that she began to listen to some of the great jazz guitarists including Charlie Christian, Joe Pass, Herb Ellis, Wes Montgomery and Pat Martino. While it was Herb Ellis who championed Emily, introducing her at the 1978 Concord Jazz Festival as part of the "Guitar Explosion" show and later describing her as "the new superstar of guitar", it was the playing of Wes Montgomery that exerted the greatest influence.

In an interview with People Magazine in 1982 she famously declared that *"I may look like a nice Jewish girl from New Jersey, but inside I'm a 50-year-old, heavy-set black man with a big thumb, like Wes Montgomery."* The reality was however that she was a woman in a male dominated area of music, and if you weren't a singer it was difficult to be taken seriously.

This fact on occasion would cause confusion for Remler, as she once went on record as saying in an interview for Canadian Radio in 1983 *"When I'm playing, I don't know whether I'm a girl, boy, dog, cat or whatever. I'm just playing the music. When I leave the stage, that's when people remind me that I'm a woman."* In later interviews she would confess that she had received knockbacks as a woman playing jazz, and would frequently pick up negative feelings towards her from male colleagues until they heard her play. In an

Photo by Brian McMillen



© Brian McMillen

Photo by Tom Copi



interview with Julie Coryell in 1985, despite having proved herself as one of the most exciting guitarists playing jazz, and asked if she had had to work harder for her acceptance than male colleagues, she replied *"I still do, I didn't conquer it. Are you kidding? Now they know that I can play. But I still have to prove myself every single time."*

And prove herself she did, every time she picked up her guitar and stepped on stage or into a recording studio. This in-built desire to succeed saw Remler overcome many knockbacks, not least from one of her tutors at Berklee who told her that she had bad time. Emily's immediate response was to go away and practice with a metronome for hours and there was this dogged determination to be as good as she possibly could be although she was often consumed with self-doubt.

That she was so consistently inventive while feeling that she had to prove herself, must have been an enormous burden on an aspiring young musician, yet in her all too brief career she overcame such obstacles in creating some of the greatest jazz guitar albums of the last fifty years. A bold statement given the calibre of guitarists making a name for themselves at the time, including Bill Frisell, John Scofield and Pat Metheny. All were just a few years older than Remler and yes, all were male. So where were all the other female guitarists who were on the scene or who might have been a female role model for Emily?

The answer is there were very few female jazz guitarists at the time, and thank goodness things have improved since, albeit very slowly. The only female instrumentalist who might have had some influence on Remler as a guitarist is Mary Osborne. Active primarily from the 1940s to the late 1960s (although she did cut a couple of late career albums in 1977 and 1981), Osborne was a swing to bebop guitarist with a superb technique and sense of swing. Very little of Osborne's playing is

now available on CD/LP or digitally, but one gets a feeling for her wonderful playing on her 1959 recording *A Girl and Her Guitar* recorded in 1959 and released the following year on the Warwick label. The album featured top drawer jazz musicians in pianist Tommy Flanagan, Tommy Potter on bass and drummer Jo Jones playing a set of standards and the original 'Mary's Goodbye Blues'.

This is also pretty much the blueprint for Emily's debut album *Firefly* from 1981. Carl Jefferson of Concord Jazz had remembered Emily from their meeting a couple of years earlier and signed her to the imprint. With apparently no rehearsal, Remler recorded *Firefly* with a stellar line up of Hank Jones on piano, Bob Maize on bass and drummer Jake Hanna. Playing arrangements by Emily of jazz standards and a couple of originals, the date went well. The album upon its release was well received but was at that just one of many albums cast in the bebop/hard bop idiom.

As a guitarist Emily's lines were sharp and her solos well crafted. Favouring a soft tone on the instrument, as did her idol Wes Montgomery, the album could not fail to please but was perhaps not the all guns blazing debut of the hottest young guitarist on the scene that some may have expected of her. The music is confident and Emily is assured and not fazed by the company she is keeping, however it in retrospect is a little safe. One would have anticipated a little more edge to Horace Silver's 'Strollin'', and even 'Movin' Along' does so without any great urgency and it is Remler's contribution that catches the ear pulling along in her wake.

Remler's arrangement and the performance of 'Inception' by McCoy Tyner is much more like it. The rhythm section swings hard, and Emily digs in with a sparkling solo as if in acknowledgement of her admiration for the great pianist. Indeed, when once asked who she hadn't played with she simply replied *"Before I*

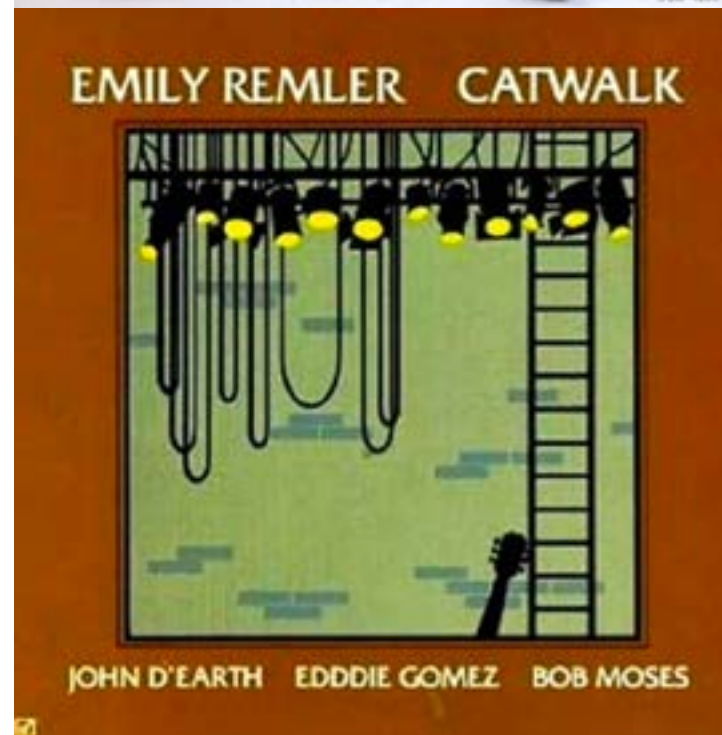
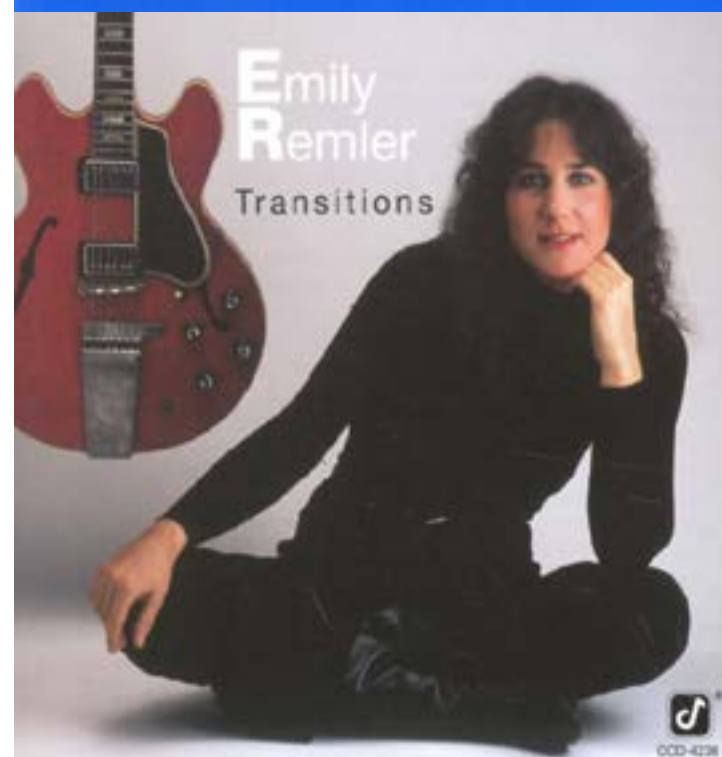
die, I want to play with McCoy Tyner”.

She did, just the once, in a jam session held at the Philadelphia Jazz Festival, just days before her death in May 1990.

The other star tracks on *Firefly* are the originals by Emily. If her concept and sense of her own playing were beginning to come together in what continued to evolve into a unique and individual sound, her writing also showed great promise. ‘Perk’s Blues’ was a lively number, as is the title track on which the guitarist plays her most compelling solo of the set, with a solo in which one phrase follows another making a most coherent musical statement.

If her debut, whilst confident and assured, was a little lukewarm, the follow up album *Take Two* a year later was anything but. A new band that was billed as the Emily Remler Quartet sounded like just that, a quartet and not guitar and supporting rhythm section. The quartet comprised of two Canadian musicians in bassist Don Thompson and drummer Terry Clarke and the pianist was James Williams. Definitely the right piano player at this time for Remler, Williams is not as well-known as he should be, and most recall him as the pianist with Art Blakey’s *Jazz Messengers* from 1977 to 1981, playing on ten of that band’s albums. Williams also had a solid solo career recording a number of highly regarded trio albums for Concord and EmArcy.

Once again Remler chose to record some familiar standards, along with some compositions by musicians she particularly admired and two original tunes. The band is immediately a tougher proposition and hit the ground running on the opening ‘Cannonball’. Bass and drums drive things along at a furious pace, and Emily’s fleet-fingered and lucid solo is matched by Williams. A quartet as smokin’ as this is just what Remler needed to show there was more to her than a mere Wes copyist, and she didn’t waste the opportunity.



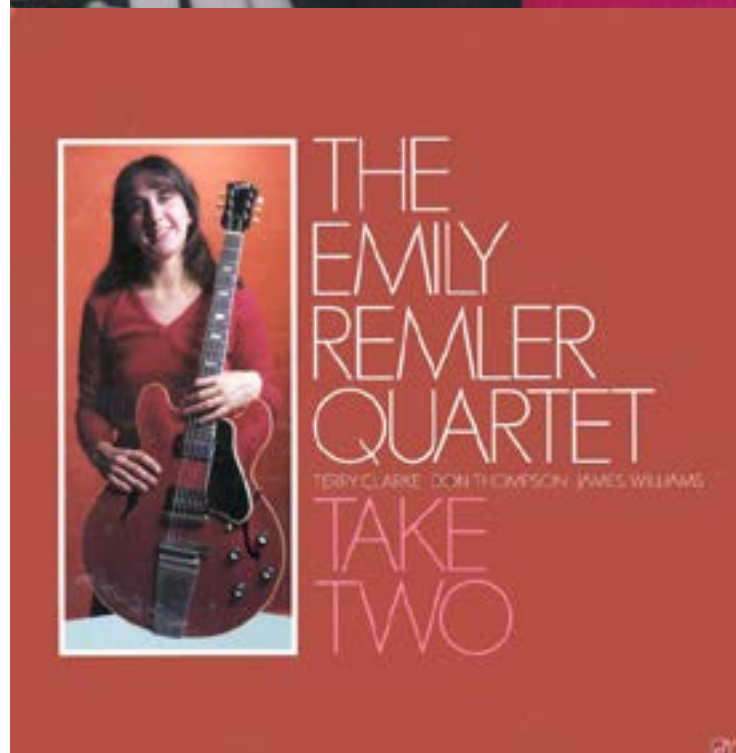
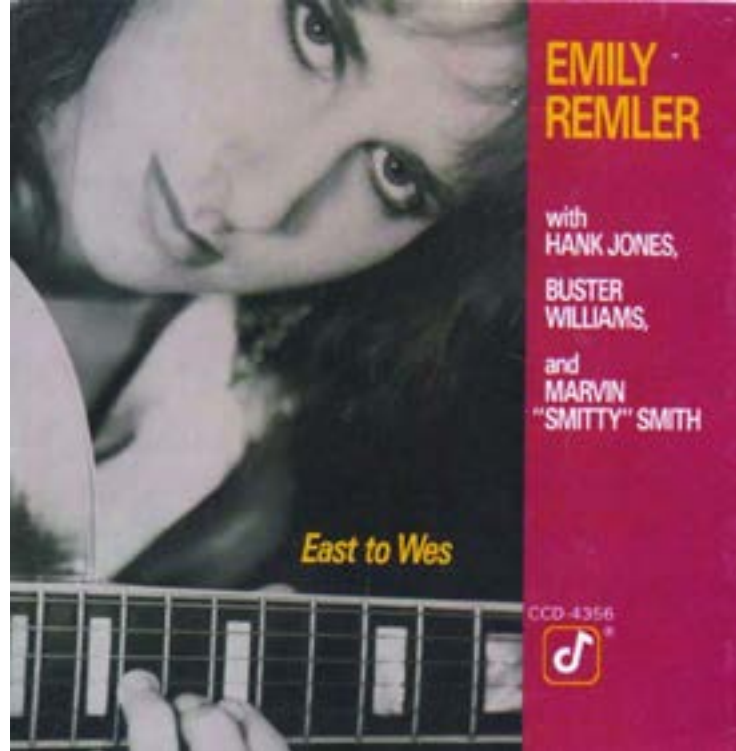
In an interesting set of tunes, Remler turns in stunning readings of 'Eleuthera' written by her then husband, Monty Alexander and a trio, sans piano, rendition of Dexter Gordon's 'For Regulars Only' that swings with a passion only matched by the guitarist's solo, and the way she accompanies herself filling in the harmony.

Again, acknowledging McCoy Tyner, Emily serves up what may yet be the definitive version of the pianist's 'Search for Peace' and equalled in sheer unadulterated beauty and emotive playing by Emily's own composition 'Waltz for My Grandfather'. The guitarist's growing compositional prowess is also heard on 'Pocket West', a bright and up-tempo swinger that elicits a wonderful solo from the guitarist that is full of vitality.

With *Take Two* Emily Remler laid claim to being the real deal and having a voice of her own on the guitar. Concord must have been thrilled with their signing and maintaining an album a year schedule, a third album from Remler, *Transitions* was recorded and released in 1983. Aptly titled, the album did witness a transition not just in Emily's playing, but also in the setting in which she placed it.

The genesis for *Transitions* must have been in Remler's mind for some time before recording the album. A year previously trumpeter John D'earth, at the suggestion of drummer Bob Moses, went to hear Emily and ended up sitting in. The trumpeter recalls the number they played was Ellington's 'In A Sentimental Mood' and D'earth says that he "got hopelessly lost", however he must have made quite an impression on Remler as afterwards she informed him that they would make a record together.

With *Transitions* the context was completely different for the guitarist. In the band was Bob Moses on drums, bassist Eddie Gomez, and as she had promised, John D'earth on trumpet. There being no piano, all harmonic duties fell on the guitarist, providing chordal accompaniment to the other soloists, and of course supporting herself. Rising to the chal-



lenge, the music brings out an added confidence and side to Emily's playing, and the freedom that came with being the only chordal instrument.

Her solos were as relaxed and fluent as always, perhaps even more so knowing that she could rely on herself and the superb bass and drums team behind her to provide the perfect accompaniment. The trumpeter proved to be the ideal foil for Remler, and both play at the top of their game.

What is most interesting is the chosen material. A standard such as Sam Jones' 'Del Sasser' swings mightily and has a fine muted solo from D'earth and the left field choice of 'Coral' by Keith Jarrett is beautifully presented by Emily and D'earth again on muted horn. But on this outing it is without doubt the original compositions that mark the recording out as something special.

Contributing half of the compositions to the recording was a big step, but one that Emily takes with confidence and provides some very tasteful music that indicates that this quartet was one that she planned to work with for a while. The opening track on the album, Remler's 'Nunca Mais' is a brisk Brazilian flavoured offering with D'earth's bright and colourful trumpet playing a particular delight, with some wonderful accompaniment from the guitarist before she steps into the limelight with her own solo. Determined not to just offer up blowing vehicles for the band, the title track and 'Ode To Mali' are carefully structured and arranged. From the delicate opening guitar accompaniment that barely gets above a whisper on 'Transitions' and Eddie Gomez' bass lines that feed into the fabric of the tune and into the trumpet solo, this is a cleverly conceived piece of writing for the group. This is also true of 'Ode To Mali' that has some excellent unison lines for guitar and trumpet and written parts for bass and drums. The music ebbs and flows with a delicacy that is captivating and obviously challenges and engages the quartet as they turn in a magnificent performance.

Arguably her finest album to date, *Transitions* must have boosted Emily's confidence both as a composer and bandleader. The members of the quartet seemed to gel on a really intimate level, and the empathy was palpable. Keeping the group together for live appearances, the guitarist took them back into the studio to record her fourth album; and this time Emily wrote all the material.

Perversely the opening number featured just the rhythm section with D'earth sitting out on the Brazilian lilt of 'Mocha Spice'. A catchy Latin inspired melody in which Remler seems to have an endless flow of ideas in her eloquently phrased solo, that would indeed have been a shame to have cut short. There is a lyricism and hint of Pat Metheny in her sound that gives further indication that she is looking to broaden the scope and tone of her own playing. This is immediately followed by the title track that has an urgency that takes the breath away. As the feel and rhythmic intensity settles, trumpeter D'earth adds to the immediacy and tension with a beautifully controlled and articulated solo. With a propulsive bass line from Gomez and a rolling commentary from drummer Bob Moses this is an ambitious piece that the quartet pull off with honours. The track also has a gritty solo from Emily who obviously relishes the vibe being set up by Gomez and Moses.

'Gwendolyn' is a tasty number at a nice, gentle medium tempo that again is brought to life by the impeccable and creative playing of Gomez and Moses. With their support, Emily seems to be able to relax and unfurl a beautifully melodic solo before making way for the bassist's own solo that seems to pick up where the guitar left off, while 'Antonio' kicks things off with a strong groove that both trumpet and guitar get stuck into. This propulsive type of rhythmic impetus from bass and drums is something that Emily would continue to explore, albeit in a gentler manner a few years later, in what would turn out to be her final studio album.



Side two of the original LP release of *Catwalk* opened with 'Pedals' which is one of Emily's most interesting compositions to date. The music is carefully arranged for trio (D'earth again sitting out) and tightly structured for bass and drums, with bassist Eddie Gomez getting the first solo over Moses's skittering brushwork and Remler's oblique accompaniment. As if switching roles, Emily begins her solo with some atmospheric chords before gradually working single note lines that continue the sense of ambiguity and tension within the music.

This is followed by 'Five Years' that opens with arco bass and has some excellent muted trumpet from John D'earth. Remler's guitar lines are again deliberately ambiguous varying from lyrical to overdubbed cries and gentle accompaniment. Another ambitious composition that works astonishingly well. Along with the closing track of the side, 'Mozambique' with its hard-hitting theme and approach to the composition by the entire quartet, Emily is showing that

she is more than a straight ahead hard bop guitarist and stepping out of the shadow of Wes Montgomery, as a musician with her own voice and a mature compositional style that is rapidly evolving.

With two superb quartet albums under her belt, with trumpeter John D'earth proving an excellent front line partner, Emily must have been delighted. However, the next two albums took her away from the group sound she was creating. Whether this was at the request of her label - she was still under contract to Concord Jazz at this time - is not clear; and if not a step backwards this must surely be regarded with hindsight as a sideways step for Remler.

The first of these was also recorded and released in 1985, and paired Remler with fellow guitarist Larry Coryell with whom Emily was briefly romantically involved, in a set of duet performances. Released the same year as her hard hitting *Catwalk* album, this was surely seen by Concord as a

Photo by Tom Copi



crowd pleaser and would pacify any of her followers who may have been a little dismayed by the quartet release.

From the outset this is an amiable meeting between two first rate guitarists and presents little to challenge the casual listener, yet enough to satisfy guitar enthusiasts. Clifford Brown's 'Joy Spring' is a fine example of the interplay between Coryell and Remler, while Gerri's Blues' by Pat Martino finds the duo in a truly creative zone. Emily's affinity with Brazilian music is brought to the fore on a delightful and absorbing reading of Jobim's 'How Insensitive', a tune that was a staple of that guitarist's live performances.

Emily's final recording for Concord, and widely to be regarded as her finest album, is the excellent *East to Wes*, that is far more than a tribute to Wes Montgomery, as Remler acknowledges her debt to the guitarist and yet imposes her own original voice on proceedings. Once again, the setting is perfect for the occasion. Pianist Hank Jones who was on Emily's debut album Firefly makes a welcome return and the line up is completed by Buster Williams and Marvin 'Smitty' Smith on drums. If the choice of Smith is a bit of a wild card it comes off a treat, as the polyrhythmic approach of the drummer pushes Remler into new areas to explore. This rapport is heard on the up-tempo numbers 'Hot House' and 'Daahoud', yet it is Emily's acoustic guitar playing on the unlikely 'Snowfall' by Claude Thornhill that first captures the attention, as does the switch to electric guitar on Blossom Dearie's 'Sweet Georgia Fame'.

Most pleasing is the inclusion of three of Emily's original compositions in the swinging 'Blues For Herb' and exquisite 'Ballad from a Music Box' that has some lovely interplay between guitar and piano. Remler's tribute to her idol is complete on her rendition of her own 'East to Wes' that shows that she is now very much her own woman, and able to step out of the shadow of others with a voice now that is unmistakably hers.

In a slim discography, *East to Wes* is, more than any other, the album that Emily Remler is remembered for. However, the story does not end there although this may have been the guitarist choosing to close one chapter ready to begin the next, as her final studio album testifies.

With her contract with Concord now fulfilled, Remler's seventh and final studio album was recorded and released on Justice Records. In a move that probably dismayed many of her loyal die-hard jazz followers, Emily with *This Is Me* took her music into the realm of crossover music that draws on electric jazz, fusion and pop. She did this with eleven new compositions that all point her music in a new direction without ever sacrificing her own integrity as an improvising musician.

Taken with the sound on the guitar that she had spent a lifetime developing, the music may have taken on more accessible rhythms and beats, with the melodic contour of pieces like 'Deep In Trance' also easier to follow, but the sharp incisive improviser's mind that were Remler's trademark ensured that the music always had something interesting to say.

Working with contemporary keyboard player David Benoit and drummer Jeff Porcaro of Toto fame would obviously bring a new dimension to her playing, but it did not change who she was as an artist, and on 'Simplicidaje' we get to hear Emily exploring the guitar synthesiser in her work.

Although not finding much sympathy with many of the jazz critics of the time, the album bears repeated listening and stands the test of time remarkably well. There is no mistaking who the guitarist is, with the compositions all following on as a natural development from her earlier writing. Completed shortly before her untimely death and released posthumously, we will never know what was in Remler's mind when making *This Is Me*, and where she planned to take her music next.

If her final studio recording did not appear to find favour and was soon to be deleted, it appeared to be the end of the road for any new music from Emily Remler. The albums recorded during her lifetime seem almost destined to be forgotten with the exception of *East To Wes* and the guitarist's name to be relegated to the annals of recent jazz history. However, that might all be set to change with the release of previously unissued live recordings on Resonance Records with the double CD/triple LP, *Cookin' At The Queens*.

The album is compiled from tapes recorded at the club that would later be edited down for broadcast on radio. These tracks can be found on YouTube, but the real value in these impeccably produced recordings is the fact that they bring forth more than an hour of previously unreleased material that was deemed too long for the scheduled radio broadcasts.

The tracks from 1984 feature Remler in a quartet of guitar, Peruvian pianist Cocho Arbe, bassist Carson Smith and on drums Tom Montgomery, and the band come out meaning business. Kicking off with 'Moanin' by Bobby Timmons, the guitarist is immediately on dazzling form with her use of octaves and single note lines that positively sing. This is then followed by a Remler favourite in Jobim's 'How Insensitive' and then a brisk 'Autumn Leaves', and the guitarist spinning out wonderful solos in both.

The rhythm section acquits itself with aplomb, and pianist Arbe plays some memorable solos, but it is Emily's gig and she is out to play. There is a lovely and extended reading of 'Polka Dots and Moonbeams' and a fine 'West Coast Blues' that Wes himself would have approved of.

The concert from September 1988 is a trio date, and as on the studio albums, Remler recorded without a piano, so we get to hear the complete guitarist playing the role of both accompanist and soloist. For me,

these are the more satisfying performances with Emily weaving her magic on four exacting long versions of 'Manha De Carnival', 'All Blues' and a superb 'So What/Impressions' that seamlessly blends the related compositions of Miles and Coltrane.

The music is a timely reminder of a young woman who was rapidly becoming the most exciting new guitarist in jazz, and having absorbed and processed her influences, was showing the first fruits of her dedication and hard work in establishing her own voice on the instrument.

However, these accolades did not come without great pressures exerted on Remler from outside sources. She faced gender discrimination, resentment and sexual harassment, and this negative attention coupled with a natural inclination to party hard, found Emily fighting a continuous battle with alcohol and narcotics that would ultimately claim her life.

Despite periods in the late 1980s when she was clean, her demons would continue to follow her. There were signs of a decline at the end of the decade, and against the advice of others Remler flew to Australia to play some concerts in May 1990. After playing a two hour set at the Richmond Hotel in Adelaide on the 3rd May, Emily Remler died of heart failure at the home of fellow musician Ed Gaston.

It is hoped that with new music coming to light and being released some thirty four years after her death, that the name of *Emily Remler* will once again be spoken of, and the guitarist given the recognition that she deserves.

If there has been no one quite like Emily since her passing, her legacy lives on in the other female guitarists she has inspired to pursue their dreams. Guitarist Sheryl Bailey is just one such musician who, like Remler, started out with an interest in rock music before falling under the spell of Wes Montgomery. Bailey would later acknowl-

edge her debt to Emily in dedicating her 2010 album *A New Promise* to the late guitarist.

If some of Remler's albums are becoming increasingly difficult to find on vinyl or CD, they can be located online via YouTube (I've not found everything available on streaming services). There are a couple of excellent compilations in *Retrospectives Volume 1 "Standards"* and *Retrospective Volume 2 "Compositions"* that feature music from Emily's studio albums. As good as these are as a snapshot of a master guitarist and one of the finest female jazz musicians of the twentieth century, the recommendation is always to check out the original albums.

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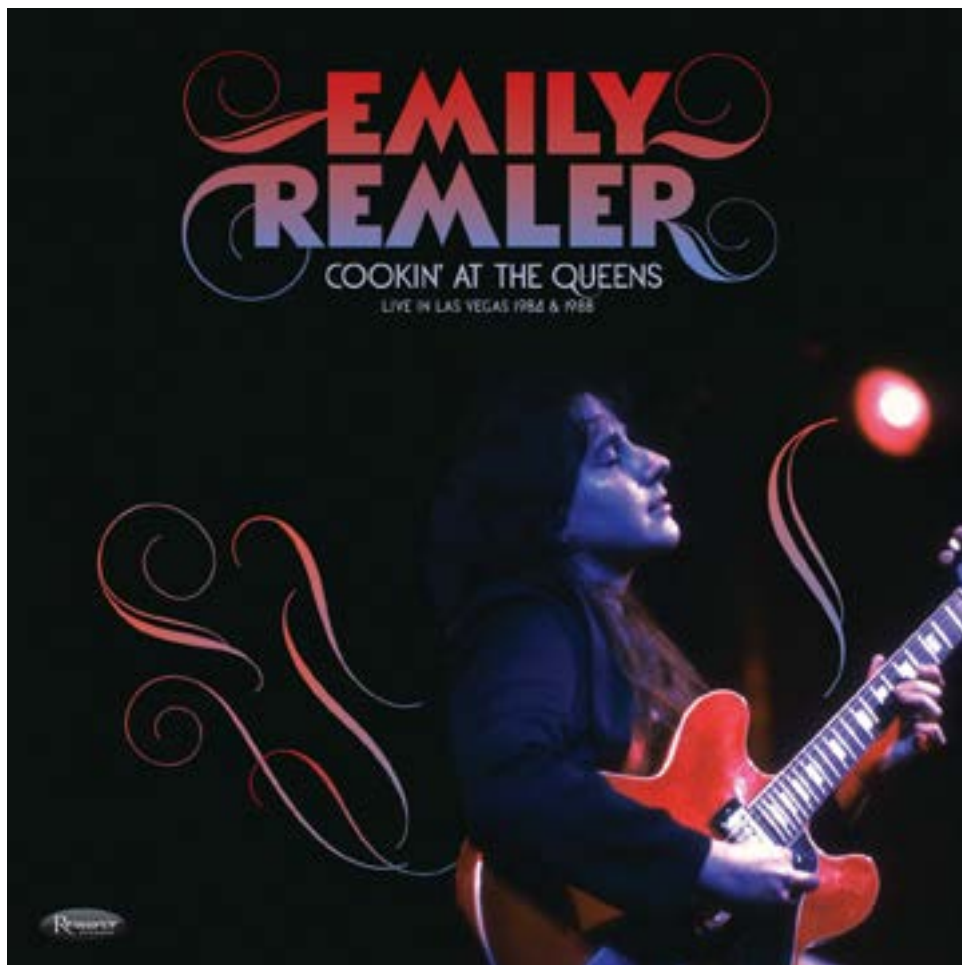


Photo by Rob Blackham



ON AN EMPOWERING EXPEDITION WITH CLAIRE COPE

BY GERMANA STELLA LA SORSA

Talking about women in the music industry, a dear friend of mine recently shared with me the concept of having to see a woman in action with certain instruments - usually “socially assigned” to men - to acknowledge and believe that, for example, female trombone players exist. My friend had a good point and I have to admit that I've never thought about it: we've become so used to the idea that the prototype of a woman in jazz is a singer that seeing a woman playing drums, percussion, trombone, guitar and more, still surprises a lot of people out there. It really seems that we're more and more in need to witness empowered women that, with their actions and creations, remind us that this is not only a man's world.

For some, it's still difficult to name female musicians and, as a matter of fact, for some roles there are not enough names around. For instance, what concerns jazz composers, is we mainly think about Maria Schneider and Carla Bley...but are there other female composers? The answer is yes, of course, and I'm going to give you another one to follow closely.

Jazztrail has forecasted her as “a promising future (...) as a composer” and her work will definitely make you believe that female jazz composers are a “real thing”. Her name is Claire Cope: she is the bandleader of contemporary large ensemble “Ensemble C”, with which she's due to release a stunning second album. With her music - “imaginative, uplifting, thoughtful and reflective”, to quote the

words of award-winning saxophonist and composer Andy Scott - Cope explores a wide range of genres, navigating through contemporary classical, jazz and improvised music.

Cope studied piano performance at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester with SallyAnn Macleod (where she won the John Ireland Prize and the Principal's Prize for Improvisation) and also holds both an FRSM in piano performance with distinction and an MA in musicology with distinction from The Open University.

As a pianist, she collaborates with a diverse range of musicians and has performed in Andy Scott's Mancunity band at the Manchester Jazz Festival and performed on the debut solo album by Jemma Freese of British alt-rock band Maximo Park. In 2022 she was honoured with the Marvin Hamlisch International Music Award for Jazz Composition and premiered a new work commissioned by the groundbreaking Apollo Saxophone Quartet at the International Anthony Burgess Foundation in Manchester.

In 2020, Cope released her debut album [Small World](#) with Ensemble C, a septet that includes Cope herself on piano and synthesiser and some of the most renowned UK jazz musicians such as Brigitte Beraha on vocals, Jack Davies on trumpet, Jon Ormston on drums, Tom Varrall on guitar, Ed Babar on electric

bass and double bass and Rob Cope on tenor saxophone. After 5 years from her debut and following up both becoming a mother and developing a more defined self-awareness as a composer and a precise musical vision, Cope is ready with a new album. *Every Journey* which will be released on the 7th of March 2025 and it's no coincidence that the album will be out a day before International Women's Day.

Cope was indeed inspired to write her new music based upon stories of brave and fearless women. She cites explorer and author Jacki Hill-Murphy as a major inspiration and is influenced by both Maria Schneider's compositions and the sound of the early Pat Metheny Group.

To open up to new sound possibilities but also as a proof of a creative expansion, Ensemble C widens into an 11-piece group, that now features guitarist Ant Law, trumpeter Mike Soper (on flugelhorn), saxophonist Matt Carmichael, trombonist Anoushka Nanguy, trumpeter Freddie Gavita, percussionist Jack McCarthy, bassist Gavin Barras alongside again with Brigitte Beraha, Rob Cope and Jon Ormston: a true dream team with which to venture out into an unexplored world of adventuresses, explorers and fearless heroins...through Cope's sonic lenses.

GSLs: *Every Journey* is steeped in stories about empowered women, intertwining tales from writer Jacki Hill-Murphy with the soundscapes of Maria Schneider. Could you tell us the story of how you put together these inspirations and what is the ultimate message - if there is one - that you want to share with the album?

CC: *I had a big vision for this album when I first started imagining how it could take form, all the way back in 2020. Whilst the first musical seeds were planted back then, I was discovering more about the incredible stories and journeys of forgotten female adventurers. I am a big fan of the adventure world, as someone who loves travelling*

and hiking especially. When I discovered Jacki Hill-Murphy's work, I was so inspired by, not only the explorer's themselves and their incredible bravery, but also Jacki and her passion and commitment in retracing their journeys. I started to think that there could be a musical narrative that could form the basis of an album, becoming about taking that first step on a journey towards something, and how that is always the biggest challenge. That resonated so much with me personally, and my journey as a musician, as I am sure it would for many.

GSLs: Can you tell us more about Ensemble C? How was it born in the first place and how did it evolve from the septet in *Small World* to the 11-piece group of *Every Journey*?

CC: *The release of the first Ensemble C album in 2020 was a very important step forwards for me personally as a musician. I had wanted to write an album like this for many, many years but I struggled to find the confidence to take the first step. Finally getting together with those 6 incredible musicians was an amazing moment, and the music felt like a really honest creation of what I had been wanting to make for so long.*

After that, I knew I wanted to explore a bigger soundworld, and push myself as a composer in learning how to write and arrange for a much larger ensemble. I also knew that the musical ideas that were swimming around in my head required a more powerful source. That year became a real turning point for me personally, in really uncovering my true identity as a composer. Writing for a full scale big band did not feel like the right step then, so I was really interested in the idea of creating something that sits in between small ensemble and big band. With 11 musicians, you can create big textures, but there is still space for more intricate and intimate moments, with maximum communication between the musicians.

Photo by Rob Blackham



GSLs: Is there a track on this album that is particularly dear to you? Does this track also reflect your favourite story of all the ones told on the record? If not, which is the story that you treasure the most?

CC: *There are so many moments on this album that I will treasure forever, because of what these incredible musicians made of them! 'Isabel' was one of the first tunes I wrote for this album, and I remember getting severe writer's block with that for a very long time! I distinctly remember listening again and again to Pat Metheny records and really trying to identify how he constructs his melodies, and then I felt like I knew what to do. I think a lot about that process now when I get stuck on something! In terms of stories, that one, about Isabela Godin and her journey down the Amazon, so dramatic and unbelievable, is also one that I thought about again and again. But there are so many other special places too that I am so grateful for – Brigitte's incredibly beautiful lyrics on 'The Birch and The Larch' which so poetically tell that story, for instance.*

GSLs: You describe "Every Journey" as being about "courage, overcoming anxiety and finding inner peace" and - particularly for you - "feeling comfortable in (your) choices as a musician and deciding to identify as a composer". What was the key turning point in your life that helped you feel at ease with your choices and artistic identity? What advice would you give to someone who is struggling to take the steps forward towards what they really want to do and/or be?

CC: *It was around the time of releasing my first album with Ensemble C, and as I turned 30, that I realised that it is the process of writing new music that I love so much, and I suddenly realised that I didn't need to limit myself. Having trained as a classical pianist, contemporary music in other genres or styles is also very impor*





tant to me. Though jazz will always be the wonderful way in which I started composing, I enjoy so much trying to write music for a very diverse and eclectic range of musicians and ensembles. I will always be so grateful to my brilliant friend and incredible composer and musician Andy Scott, who gave me one of my first writing opportunities for The Apollo Sax Quartet. And this urge to learn all I can about composing has led me to want to finally study it more formally, and so I took another big step forwards this academic year in returning to study composition at the Royal Northern College of Music with Gary Carpenter and Emily Howard. As a 35 year old student Mum, it is hugely challenging, but I am learning so much, and am so grateful for this time to more seriously dedicate to my work and personal development.

I would say that sometimes it is focusing too much on the end goal, or what you want to achieve that can feel so overwhelming, as it might be something big that feels unobtainable. I think it is really important to break it down into smaller chunks, and to think about the practical steps you can take to achieving each of those smaller goals. Each step on that path will get you to where you want to be. Also, seek out the people who can help you and ask for help. And think about how every single person who has gotten to certain place in their journey started somewhere.

GSLs: In the interval between your albums, you became a mother. How did this impact your life as a composer and as a musician? What's the greatest lesson that you've learnt from your child?

CC: Becoming a Mum had a really extraordinary affect on my life as a musician and composer. A lot of music came out of me after that first year of getting used to everything, and I found writing music, for me, to be a very healing and cathartic process. But having my daughter also inspired me to be a better role model for her. To be more proactive and not waste time, because suddenly you think about time in a different way – it isn't all yours anymore. My biggest hope is that

she grows up knowing she can achieve anything, and that she has the confidence to try things and believe in herself. So I am trying to let that be a lesson for myself as well! Sometimes it feels like being two different people at once, and it can be extremely challenging, especially when trying to be creative in short bursts (anyone who composes knows how frustrating it is when you are deep in the flow with something and you are forced to stop!) But I have therefore gotten much better at using my time in the most efficient way, and enjoying those moments that I get to myself. As she grows up, seeing her enjoyment and experience of music develop is so incredible!

GSLs: Talking again about empowered women, who is your biggest female role model and why?

CC: I really don't know where to begin! Of course my Mum and sister. Musicians such as Joanna McGregor, Zoe Rahman and Nikki Iles were huge role models to me when I was growing up and wanting to be a pianist (and of course still are). A friend at school brought Zoe's Melting Pot album for me when I was about 16, and discovering that music, and discovering women in the contemporary jazz world, was really life changing!

Of course, Maria Schneider, and the sheer power of her voice and how she leads and has crafted her sound over so many years, will forever inspire me. To have the confidence and commitment to realising such huge visions is so inspiring to me. And Anna Clyne, as a composer in the more contemporary classical world, is hugely influential. There are also so many women not in the musical world who I would say are role models, however, lots of women in the adventure world such as Anna McNuff who has ran and cycled all over the world. And also the incredible Rosie Swale Pope, 74 years young, who is running solo from the UK to Kathmandu, a journey of over 6000 miles. Age is but a number!





GSLs: We hear a lot about artists struggling to keep up with a music industry that is increasingly demanding. Is there a specific issue that you think we should talk more about? What would you suggest to improve the situation?

CC: *I think ageism is a big problem in the music industry. Music is such a lifelong commitment and learning process – it is continuous development and discovery until you die, I believe, whenever that may be. So the media pushing and pushing a certain image of having everything figured out at a very young age puts a lot of pressure on young people. You need time to experiment and try things out, and really learn about yourself and the music you want to make. I think we need to be celebrating musicians of all ages and who are at different stages in their journey. We can't all go on the same path, and I believe we can all learn from each other.*

GSLs: What are the next steps in your journey and what are you really looking forward to after the release of the album?

CC: *This year, as I am back studying at the RNCM, I am composing the most I have ever composed. I am looking forward to my first orchestral workshop experience, as well as premieres of some new music. I am also excited to be writing some pieces for some really wonderful musicians, both here and in the US. Because of all this, I haven't had much space left to think about where Ensemble C might be in the future, so I am really looking forward to starting to think about new music for this band, and how I might develop it.*

[Claire Cope](#)
[website click here](#)

Photo by Rob Blackham





The **Women in Jazz Media** team are made up of writers, photographers, painters, musicians, presenters, journalists, producers, editors and more!

We are often asked questions about the work we do, so we thought we would take a few pages in this edition, to share some of the music from the composers and musicians in our team.

Do visit our website for more information about our team and the work we do:

[Click here to visit our website](#)

Next edition we will focus on our writers!

You will find below images of album covers – click on the album and it will take you straight there!

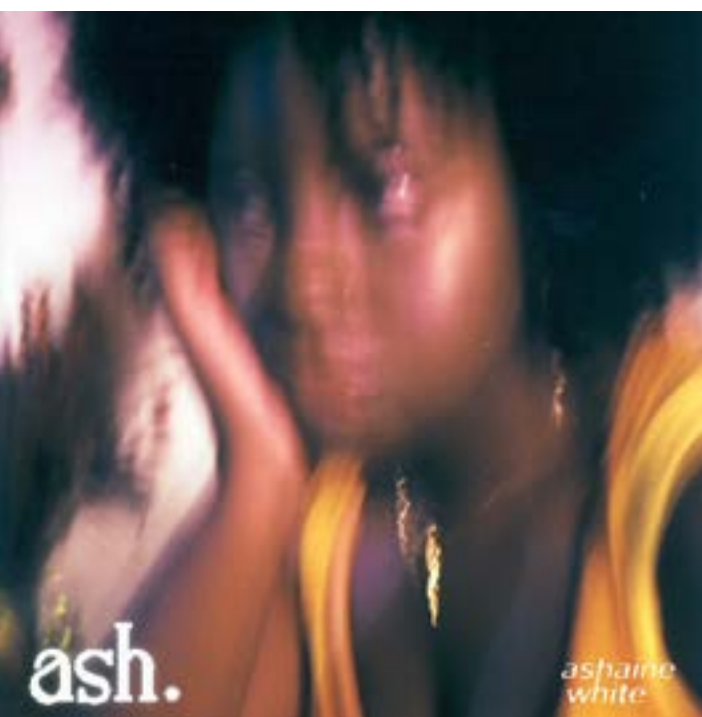


Aydenne Simone

Aydenne currently works with her fabulous jazz trio 'The Big Mama Trio', incorporating Aydenne's nickname 'Big Mama'. 'The Big Mama Trio' consists of three of London's finest jazz musicians; Tom Dring (Bass), Olly Chalk (Piano) and Gwilym Jones (Drums), and together they have had the pleasure of playing sell-out shows at some of the finest venues

BLUE SKIES

The Aydenne Simone & Liam Stevens Trio featuring London's Queen of Swing



Ashaine White

Heralded by the Ivor Novello Academy and Apple Music as one of the next rising stars of songwriting. "Ash" is a picture of Ashaine at her most authentic, writing songs that feel honest and true to her experiences with a no-frills writing style. The five-track EP echoes the likes of Ella Fitzgerald, Nina Simone, Lianne La Havas, Jeff Buckley, and Kurt Cobain placing Ashaine's sound firmly within its own lane. Non-conforming to genre or stereotypes, 'Ash' puts honesty at the core of its message and sound. "The music industry was the only place I felt I could be my most authentic self, I could be outspoken and passionate in my own way."



Betty Accorsi

Italian award-winning jazz saxophonist, composer, arranger and bandleader. "This album is how I chose to describe my first year in Brighton. I moved there after almost 3 years living in London, and it truly changed my life. I was humbled by the sheer natural beauty all around me, the music, and the life. All of this healed me, and it made me a different (and, I hope, a better) person and musician. Therefore, I decided to take photos of my 6 favourite places in Brighton and nearby to thank this city for the wonderful year together."

Charlotte Keffe
Right Here, Right Now Quartet



ALIVE! in the studio

Charlotte Keffe

Musician, trumpeter and flugelhorn player Charlotte Keffe wears her love for freely improvising, free jazz and abstract music-making on her (brightly coloured) sleeve.

Charlotte has convened her regular working Quartet to explore open ended versions of her compositions which form the basis of their live set. Captured with energy and clarity in the studio, here we have 60 minutes of real group interaction where the music from each player is balanced equally within the total group sound.

Diana Torti

Jazz singer, improviser and composer. Her extensive musical background has crossed the evocative atmosphere of ancient music, the warmth and improvisation of jazz music, the aesthetics of belcanto, the daring singing of contemporary repertoire. The exploration of intimate, versatile and intense sounds, combined with the improvisation experienced as an “expressive possibility” outside the stylistic connotations, are the result of the continuous vocal and musical research that pursues. *It's All We Have* is “a reflection on the beauty of the world and humanity in contraposition to the power which is exercised in multiple forms on people through extremism, economy and politics leading to a denial of rights and environmental threats.”



Germana Stella La Sorsa

Italian singer Germana Stella La Sorsa worked her way up through the Italian jazz scene and on moving to the UK in 2017, quickly established herself on the London jazz scene.

La Sorsa released her debut album “Vapour” in December 2021 on 33 Jazz Records and melds her disparate influences in her second studio album “Primary Colours”, released in January 2024 with the support of Help Musicians.

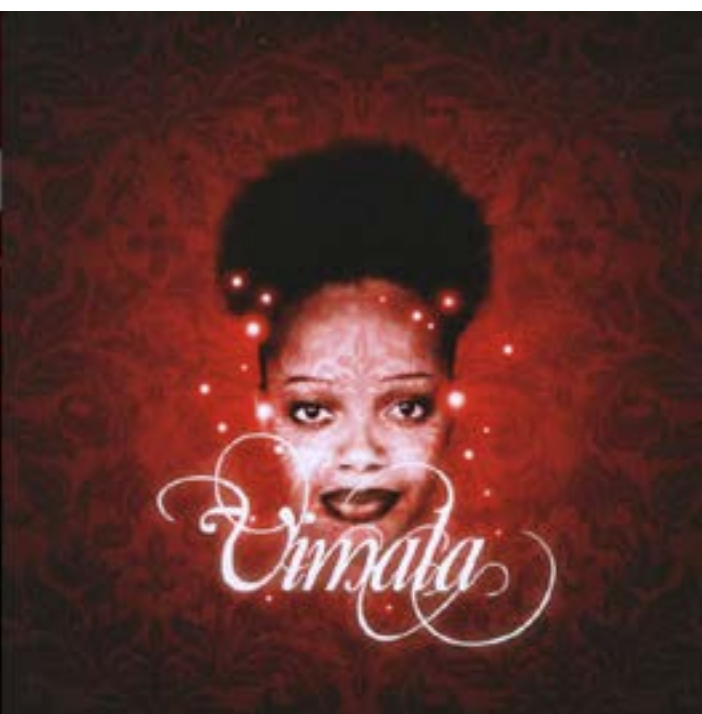




Hannah Horton

An artist who goes her own way. As an award-winning, Selmer endorsed saxophonist and composer, a bandleader, and a successful recording artist, her strong, clear tone, powerful rhythmic sense and compelling sense of melody make her an unmistakeable voice on the scene.

Recorded at the iconic Pizza Express Jazz Club in Soho in front of a sold-out audience, Live in Soho is full of energy, intoxicating excitement, with a beautiful flow of tracks.



Vimala Rowe

From her training in Hindustani classical music in India, to world music, soul and effortlessly swinging Jazz, award winning singer Vimala Rowe has rapidly become recognised as a major talent on the British jazz scene. Sell out performances at Ronnie Scott's, Pizza Express Jazz Club-Soho, 606 Club, London Jazz Festival and countrywide, she delights and enchants her audiences with her naturally passionate and emotive range of expression. Her phenomenal accolades include a highly successful duo with guitar legend John Etheridge, culminating in an acclaimed eclectic album of their own work, jazz and world inspirations. 'Sweeping musical horizons', The guardian.



Jasna Jovičević

A distinguished figure in the Serbian jazz scene, renowned for her versatility as a musician, composer, and artistic researcher. She is a master of multiple instruments, including the saxophone, bass clarinet, flute, and spacedrum.

The trio Triple Reed consists of established musicians from Cene Resnik, Damir Capri Kafka and Jasna Jovičević. Although the trio's music is improvised, the musicianship is based on a carefully elaborated concept, within which the musicians reflect on their own role in mutual interaction.



Kim Cypher

One of the UK's most exciting saxophonists, vocalists, composers & band leaders.

Four years in the making - A diverse, highly eclectic album, created out of LOVE for music, driven by PASSION, POSITIVITY and huge RESPECT for those working in the arts. Music marking a moment in time, shaped by life's rich tapestry and personal events, celebrating uniqueness, and catching moments with others who devote their lives to a brighter tomorrow for the arts #brightertomorrowforthearts



Lara Eidi

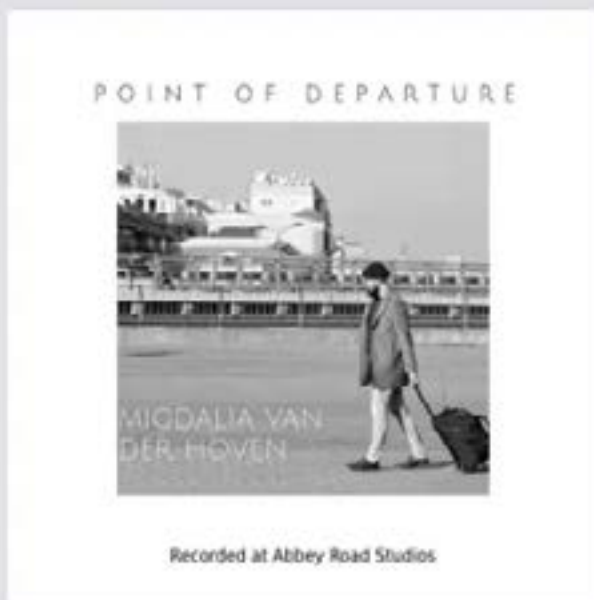
A soulful vocal artist; composer; musician.; story teller ; a seeker of truth. Her music seeks to elevate, heal and connect with audiences and listeners alike. " a singer who knows no niche, because she has created one of her own "

“ Even on the darkest of days, there is always Sun .. I like to believe that on the hardest of days, I can breathe love into the world. I can feel the sun, touch down and converse with gravity. I can choose to let go and forgive, and I can choose to ride the tide as it comes, and get ready for the unexpected wave. ‘



Laura Impallomeni

Trombonist, composer and psychologist Laura Impallomeni brings the trombone to the fore, with an exciting evening of exhilarating music that will leave you wanting more. Laura plays in a plethora of diverse projects, from swing to jive, reggae, afro beat and Latin music, as well as various experimental music projects. She recently took part in the 'Sophisticated Giants' event celebrating the work of Melba Liston and has been named 'one to watch' by award winning legend, Maxine Gordon



Migdalia van der Hoven

An international award winning Mexican-British drummer who is currently working in the UK's musical theatre, jazz and function scene. She is a Vater Percussion, Bosphorus Cymbals and RTOM Corporation endorser and artist. Migdalia was named "Woman of the Year" in Mexico in 2022 for her contributions to arts and culture.

She has also been selected to join the Drumset Committee at the Percussive Arts Society, the world's largest percussion organisation in the world.



Wendy Kirkland

Pianist and singer Wendy Kirkland has been a mainstay of the UK Jazz scene since the late noughties, but it was her first album, Piano Divas, released in 2017 that began her ascent to wider recognition as a "Singing Pianist", as dubbed by Jazz Journal. The ability to sing at the same time as comping and craft solos on the piano or unison piano/voice scat lines is her forte, with influences such as Diana Krall, Eliane Elias and Dena DeRose. Further accolades were given for her 2019 release The Music's On Me, dubbed "a huge leap forward" by Jazz Views. Both albums prompted ACE funded tours all over the UK and constant radio airplay ever since.



Mary Sho

Mary Sho, a singer and songwriter hailing from South London with a worldwide sound which transcends time and space, offering a home to lovers of authentic, live sounds. Sho's sound drops you into the late 70's and early 80's with tinges of contemporary soul infused with funk origins, creating sounds similar to if Lizzo met Solange met Childish Gambino met Sly and The Family Stone with Thundercat on additional bass! Mary released her debut EP Woman Rising in November 2023 which was featured by China Moses on her Jazz Adjacent Show.



Photos of our 4 year anniversary event, Nov 2024
by Tatiana Gorilovsky



Samara Joy by Enid Farber



BEHIND THE LENS

THE PHOTOGRAPHERS

Enid Farber





Lisa Fischer
Montclair Jazz Festival
Montclair, NJ
by Enid Farber

Brianna Thomas
Montclair Jazz Festival,
Montclair, NJ
by Enid Farber



Ekep Nkwelle
Charlie Parker Jazz Festival
NYC
by Enid Farber







Carmen Lundy
The Charlie Parker Jazz Festival
NYC
by Enid Farber

Brandee Younger Jazz in the Valley Festival
Poughkeepsie, NY
by Enid Farber



Lenore Raphael,
Fort Lee Public Library,
Fort Lee, NJ
by Enid Farber







2024 JJA JAZZ HEROES

*Antoinette
Montague*
MONTCLAIR, NEW JERSEY



JJA JAZZ
HEROES
2024
JAZZ JOURNALISTS ASSOCIATION

Susan Brink presenting the JJa
Jazz Hero award to
Antionette Montague
Clements Place,
Newark, NJ



JAZZ MEETS POP: STRATEGIES TO HELP YOU SUCCEED TIME AND TIME AGAIN

BY JORDANNAH ELIZABETH

I met my assistant while teaching at the School of Jazz at The New School in New York City. She stood out, not necessarily because of her gift for singing, though she had a very nice voice, not because she was the most ambitious, though she much of her work well. She became my assistant, who I quickly leaned on and considered quite valuable, because of her kindness. She would show up to class early, and we would talk about music, life, and an appropriate amount of humorous exchanges regarding relationships. This allowed us to discuss the structure of a love song. Over time, I was able to hear her music, which was a combination of R&B and popular music though she was taking a course, my course, via the School of Jazz.

A few months later, I was standing in the busy train terminal on Liverpool Street in London with one of my favorite people, Fiona Ross, founder of [Women in Jazz Media](#). We agreed that I would write an article for the magazine, as we found that we both felt concern that Jazz musicians are less likely to reflect on pop music marketing promotion and strategies. Though I, as a professor who intuitively teaches this convergence, taking certain structures from popular music and embedding them into our work in the jazz is not only helpful but effective.

Before I get into the specifics of infusing pop music business strategies, to grow a career in jazz, is that kindness, humility, living as a lifelong student, bring a great listener, being easy to work with, having a serious work ethic and a rigorous rehearsal schedule and creative sessions, really are the foundation to fostering a great career.

Also, have something to offer your band, your friends and collaborators, your staff

and team, something for their time and generosity. If you cannot offer money, connecting them with like-minded musicians, sharing your guest list spots, paying for coffee and simply creating memorable experiences when jamming, conversing and exchanging ideas and energy can take you such a long way.

Now, on to my practical, technical and strategic tips for Women in Jazz. I may not have mentioned the struggles we face in this industry, but that is because I hope you'll do away with all discount thoughts, traverse reality with wonderment, humor and determination and never let discrimination deter you from your dreams and artistic and financial stability.

Infusing pop music strategies to create a long and healthy career in Jazz in pop music, artists often have a clear personal brand (e.g., style, image, voice). For jazz musicians, it's essential to carve out your own artistic identity, whether through your playing style, repertoire, or image. Establish a cohesive presence across your website, social media, and album artwork to create a recognizable brand. Share regular content such as performance snippets, collaborations, jam sessions, or even educational content about jazz. Pop artists often share intimate content—think about doing the same with your unique jazz perspective to cultivate fan engagement. You can, of course, share this content on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube to give behind-the-scenes glimpses of your creative process, rehearsals, and performances. These platforms are great for building a fanbase, showcasing your personality, and engaging with your audience in real-time.

To expand on this, pop artists rely heavily on music videos to create a visual narrative around their songs. Jazz musicians should invest in creating striking music videos that match their artistic vision. Consider using creative visuals to tell the story of a composition, capturing the energy and emotion of a live performance or showcasing beautiful cinematography. Livestreams not only allow fans to interact with you but also serve as virtual tours, expanding your reach to those who can't attend your shows in person. Jazz musicians can benefit from Cross-Genre Collaborations by collaborating with pop artists or producers to create fusion projects. Such partnerships can help introduce jazz to new audiences, especially if it involves remixing jazz tunes with contemporary pop elements. Consider allowing your tracks to be remixed in electronic, dance, or other pop-inspired genres. This can breathe new life into your music and make it more accessible to younger, pop-oriented listeners. Jazz musicians can make guest appearances on pop albums, allowing exposure to wider audiences. Similarly, inviting pop artists to feature on your projects can increase visibility and credibility.

A great way to connect with audiences is organizing tours that focus on specific themes (e.g., a tribute to a jazz legend, naming your tour after the album you are actively promoting). Create a buzz around your tours by releasing exclusive tour content or offering early ticket sales for loyal fans. While traditional jazz clubs are key, pop music festivals and larger venues can help expand your reach. Look for opportunities to perform at high-profile events, collaborate with major festival organizers, or even open for pop artists. This exposes you to listeners who might not otherwise seek out jazz music.

When it comes to releasing music, Jazz musicians can do the same by releasing individual tracks, singles, or EPs consistently, creating buzz around each new release while building up to a larger album drop, and creating unique merchandise (T-shirts,

vinyl, posters) or offer exclusive recordings, behind-the-scenes content, or digital masterclasses to generate additional revenue and build a more intimate connection with fans.

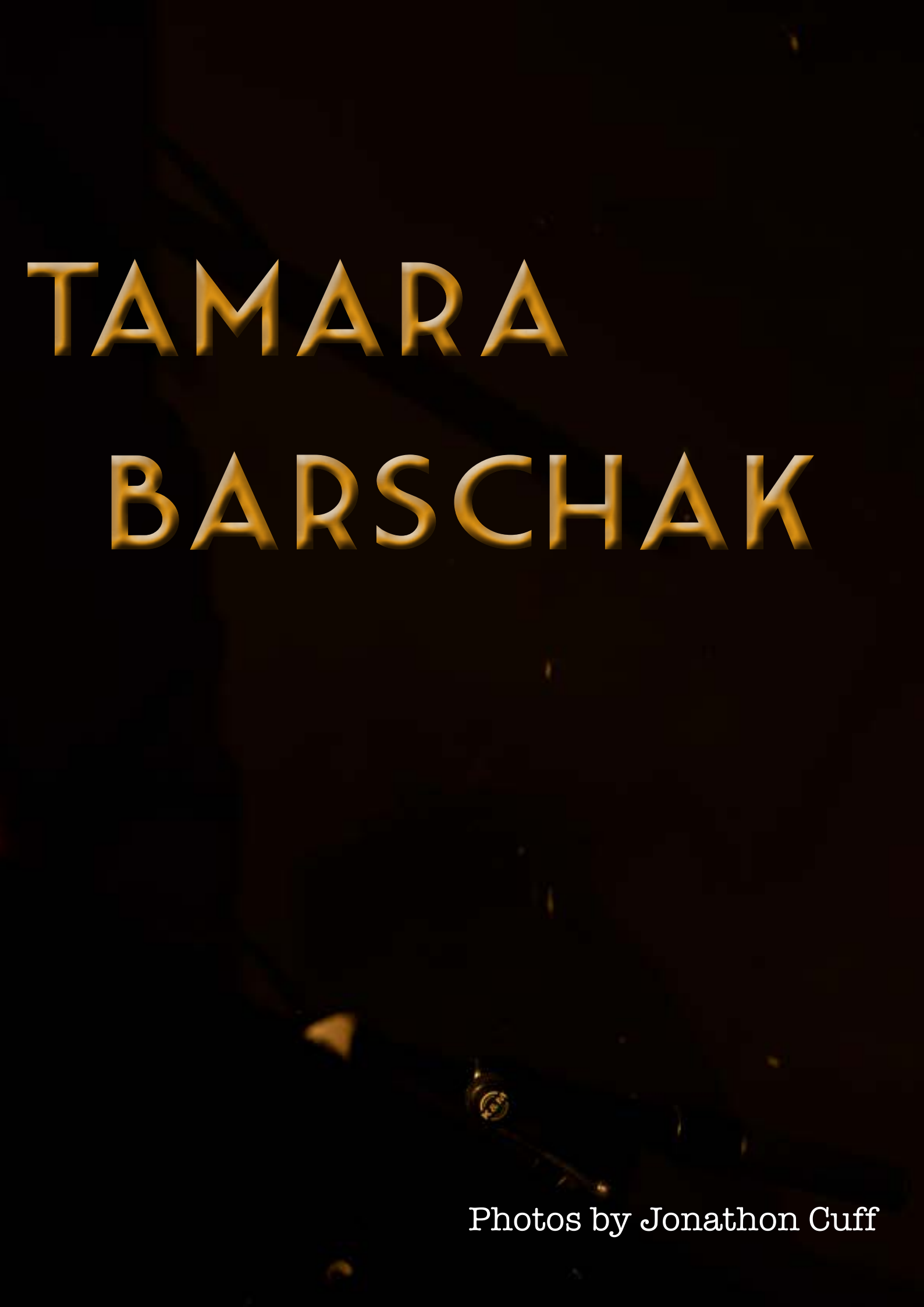
Actively seek press coverage in both jazz-specific and broader music media outlets. Pitch your music to online magazines, podcasts, and radio stations that specialize in both jazz and broader music genres, and do your very best not to overlook local publications or niche blogs that focus on jazz, culture, and lifestyle. These outlets can create more targeted buzz and attract listeners who are interested in your specific genre, and hire a public relations (PR) team to handle media outreach and interviews, just as pop stars do. A well-crafted PR strategy can elevate your visibility, land you media spots, and position you as a rising star in the jazz world.

One thing a lot of jazz musicians don't discuss amongst one another when working to nurture and grow their careers is licensing their songs for movies, TV shows, or commercials. Jazz musicians can also pursue these licensing opportunities, especially if you create original compositions with broad appeal.



[Visit Jordannah's website here](#)





TAMARA BARSCHAK

Photos by Jonathon Cuff

A CREATIVE WORLD OF KALEIDOSCOPIC VIBRANCY

Kim Cypher chats to musician and composer Tamara Barschak to unveil what lies beneath her love and passion for music and her colourful, heartfelt compositions.

Nothing gives me more joy than discovering wonderful creative people who fill the world with positive, vibrant energy. I remember vividly the day I came across a piece of music by Tamara Barschak. As I mundanely scrolled through the uninspiring news feed on social media, I was suddenly stopped in my tracks by the most beautiful piece of music singing out to me. There was a soprano saxophone playing a stunning haunting melody, together with a captivating lady at the piano, fingers running up and down the keys making a rippling effect that sounded like flowing water. I was immediately drawn in and compelled to listen to the piece to the end. It was a live video of a piece called 'Rivers of You' filmed at London jazz venue 'Toulouse Lautrec' and the piece was announced as a dedication to "Mum and Dad", being about unconditional love. I knew in an instant that this lady, Tamara Barschak was very special indeed, a beautiful creative soul with an ability to reach out to the hearts of others with her music.

The more I found out about Tamara and listened to her music, the more I related to her unique, quirky, passionate creativity and her humorous approach to life. A fellow 'heart and soul' performer and a musician dedicated to her craft. A film soundtrack composer who has studied Latin music in Brazil, trained as a classical pianist and extended her musical horizons to include her love of jazz, blues, Latin and other world music styles. I could not wait to find out more!

Kim - What was the inspiration behind your band name and album title 'Kaleidoscope'?

Tamara - *"The whole ethos behind the album title "Kaleidoscope" is the indelible link between colours and sounds. Throughout history we find painters who painted to sound and conversely musicians who composed to colour. When I was 10 years old, I had an amazing piano teacher who kept a velvet bag full of different coloured squares. He would pick out a square, get me to imbibe the colour and then try and find the corresponding note on the piano. I remember clearly that red was middle C. He instilled this fascination in me for this synaesthetic way of listening to music. Music conjures up incredible multi coloured images and stories. Different keys are different moods or colours. So, on the album each track of music corresponds to a different colour or palette of colours. There are many different genres of music on the album - Bossa nova, folk ballads, jazz, blues funk and each has its own kaleidoscopic palette."*

Kim - How did your album evolve?

Tamara - *"The album evolved organically. As I love so many musical genres, I naturally gravitated towards composing in these different styles. I trained as a classical pianist and then branched out into jazz, blues, funk, folk and Latin styles. Over time I came to have this collection of songs and instrumental numbers, and I*



thought “well I have enough tracks for an album...let’s do this!” It was a tremendous challenge but such an exciting and fulfilling journey.”

Kim – Tell me about your years spent in Brazil studying Latin music.

Tamara – “I first went to Brazil aged 19 and soon discovered that Brazilian music was a veritable gold mine of gems with huge musical variety. There are so many other musical strands beyond Bossa nova and Samba. This is in part down to the history and topography of a huge country with many different states and indigenous musical personalities. To name just a few of my musical heroines and heroes I listened to Joyce, Egberto Gismonti, Tania Maria and Ivan Lins. After university I decided to go over to this continent of a country and study these exceptional and mesmeric genres. It was a very intoxicating time, living in the land, studying the music and seeing so many of the influences on these artists first hand. Many years later the incredible unusual harmonies used by people like Gis-

monti, Lins and Joyce would find their way into my own music.”

Kim – You come across as a natural born entertainer on stage. How much of that is your personality shining through as opposed to a stagecraft you have honed over the years?

Tamara – “Great question. It’s not something I have consciously set about honing. I grew up in a very warm family of raconteurs, people who were extremely sociable and loved being around people. It’s my natural instinct to want to talk to the audience and really connect with them at a gig. I want to welcome them into the space, bathe them in music, engage with them and I sure as hell want to entertain them. Giving each tune context, meaning and depth but also injecting humour into the vibe comes very naturally to me. I also love riffing and staying in the moment. It’s like the beautiful coat you put on a lovely outfit. Entertaining and feeling close to the audience completes the ensemble.”

Kim – You seem very open to exploring new and novel ways to promote yourself and to attract people to your music / advertise a gig. What's the craziest thing you've ever done?

Tamara – “We’re living in a dynamic city, a cultural haven pulsating with hundreds and thousands of musicians promoting their gigs. I am constantly trying to find humorous and inventive ways of getting punters to my gigs. Trying to stand out a little. A lot of it happens on the spur of the moment. The craziest thing I’ve done is interview myself using only a pair of sunglasses to distinguish between myself and the hot shot L.A interviewer who has flown in especially with his L.A entourage to my gig! If I get some dosh I’ll get in a plane with a pilot and get him to spray paint future gigs across the skies...or a group of multi colour skaters, skating through the town with glittery banners.”

Kim – How important is it to have a good sense of humour in this business?

Tamara – “It’s invaluable to have a sense of humour in life, let alone in the music business.”

Kim – Which three words best describe you as an artist?

Tamara – “Passionate. Versatile. Curious.”

Kim – What has been your most memorable gig or project to date?

Tamara – “So many gigs have been so special...it’s very hard to pinpoint one in particular. Recording some of the tracks from the album with the incredible Richard Bailey and spectacular Paul Booth at the beautiful Alice’s Loft studios was a wonderful day. It felt as though we were all surfing on a wave of beauty and joy.”

Kim – If you weren’t a musician and composer, what would you choose to be?



Tamara – “Interior designer. I’m obsessed with beautiful furniture and fabrics.”

Kim – What qualities do you admire most in other musicians and why?

Tamara – “Qualities of warmth, generosity of spirit and humility. There’s nothing like a band in which everyone really cares and wants to up their game in the service of the music. It isn’t about you or me, it’s about all of us and spreading the love and joy of what we do through unity. The quality of being humble. Humility is a beautiful and very endearing quality, and I have found it to be present in some of the greatest musicians.”

Kim – Your love for family really shines through. How important is it to have the support of family?

Tamara – “Support from a loving family is unbelievably precious and gives you so much fuel and energy. It is your engine. It is everything! My family have always supported and nourished my dreams with such unconditional love and joy. My Pops was a great violinist, my mother had a wonderful voice, and they were both passionate about music. They bathed us in love, culture and music. My amazing bro is my number one champion. He’s at every gig and is a contin-

uing source of amazing energy, encouragement and love. My happiness is their happiness and vice versa.”

Kim – **What are your dreams / aspirations for the future?**

Tamara – “I would love to keep composing and recording, getting new music out there! One of the things I have always found enrapturing is creating something out of a blank space, fashioning something where there was once nothing. Writing music is such an enrapturing form of creation. It is Kaleidoscopic.”

Kim – **Tell me about your forthcoming E.P Luminosity.**

Tamara – **Luminosity** is a collection of songs about rebirth and roots. These are songs which speak of emerging out of the shadows into the light and experiencing a Renaissance in one’s life, a feeling of starting anew and emerging from one’s own chrysalis. Incidentally one of the songs, “Embrace” is a song I wrote 8 months before lockdown. The chorus “Embracing a New Age” unwittingly heralded something we would all have to do all around the globe. It was a very strange feeling to have those lyrics mean far more as time wore on. At the time I wrote “Embrace” it was solely about embracing positive change and growing a new emotional skin to feel joy once more and flourish. We recorded these songs with the wonderful Sarah Gillespie producing them and the amazing Chris Montague as Musical Director and on guitar. We also had the superb Tom Smith on sax, the wonderful Davide Mantovani on bass and the excellent Joel Barford on drums and percussion. It was a very intense and fantastic recording session, a huge highlight.”

Such an uplifting experience finding out about the colourful, vibrant and creative kaleidoscopic world of Tamara Barschak. Her music reaches out to people, spreading joy and sunshine. For me, she stands out from the crowd, attracting attention for all



the right reasons. She has a clear zest for life, and truly values and loves her audiences. It is a very special thing to see, and the world is most definitely a better place with Tamara and her wonderful music in it.

Photos by [Jonathon Cuff](#)

[Click here to visit Tamara’s website](#)



Photo by Jonathon Cuff





Evita Polidoro by Monika S Jakubowska

BEHIND THE LENS

THE PHOTOGRAPHERS

Monika S Jakubowska

Alice Zawadzki

Kings Place

London

Photo by Monika S Jakubowska





Audrey Powne
Ronnie Scott's
London

Photo by Monika S Jakubowska







A dark, high-contrast black and white photograph. On the left side, a person's shoulder and upper arm are visible, wearing a dark jacket covered in small, reflective sequins that catch the light. The rest of the image is mostly black, with some faint, out-of-focus light sources and shapes in the background, possibly suggesting a stage or a dimly lit interior.

Madeline Bell
Ronnie Scott's
London

Photo by Monika S Jakubowska





Luna Cohen
The Spice of Life
London

Photo by Monika S Jakubowska

The All Female London Gay Big
Band
Toulouse Lautrec, 2023
London
Photo by Monika S Jakubowska



UTREC JAZZ CLUB



Nichola Pope
Lara De Belder
Suzanne Cross
Charlotte Keeffe
Clara Daly Donnellan
Danielle Purkiss
Maria Noronha

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

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

Available on Spotify, Apple, Google and Anchor.



THE WOMEN IN JAZZ MEDIA PODCAST SERIES





WOMEN IN JAZZ MEDIA

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
CELINE PETERSON & BLACK LIVES IN MUSIC PRESENTS

KICKING DOWN THE DOOR

a podcast series platforming
inspirational black women working
in the music industry with host

MARY SHO

Relaunching our podcast series 'Kicking Down the Door' in partnership with Black Lives in Music with host Mary Sho, platforming inspirational Black women working in the music industry.

And kicking down the door to start us off, we are thrilled to welcome inspirational singer/songwriter/producer and legend China Moore.

WOMEN IN JAZZ MEDIA

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

CELINE PETERSON & BLACK LIVES IN MUSIC

KICKING DOWN THE DOOR

MARY SHO
TALKS TO

CHINA
MOSES

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IN CONVERSATION
WITH...

WITH HOST
HANNAH HORTON



Photo by Tatiana Gorilovsky

Click on the images to go straight to the podcast!

Wendy Kirkland

Kai Hoffman

Lily Dior

Lara De Bedler & Charlotte Keeffe



STICKS AND THRONES

Shining a light on
drummers from around
the world

Click on the images to go straight to the podcast!

Ciara Chinniah
Jenny Pearson-Walinetski





WITH
MIGDALIA
VAN DER HOVEN

THE NOTES BETWEEN WITH LARA EIDI



A podcast series about the
world
of songwriting



Click on the images to go straight to the podcast!

Photo by Alexandros Petrakis

ON THE BOOKCASE



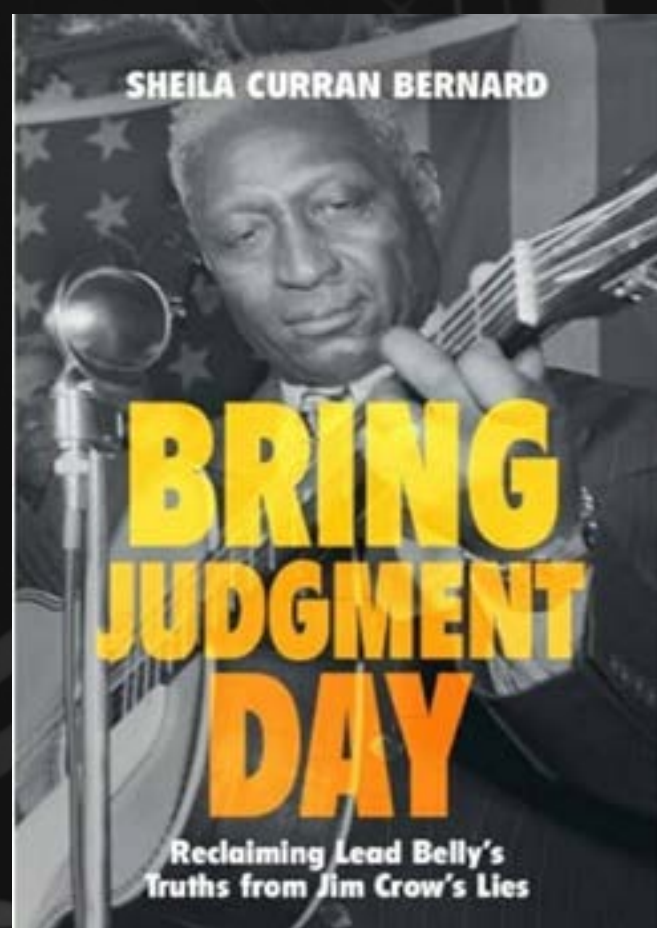
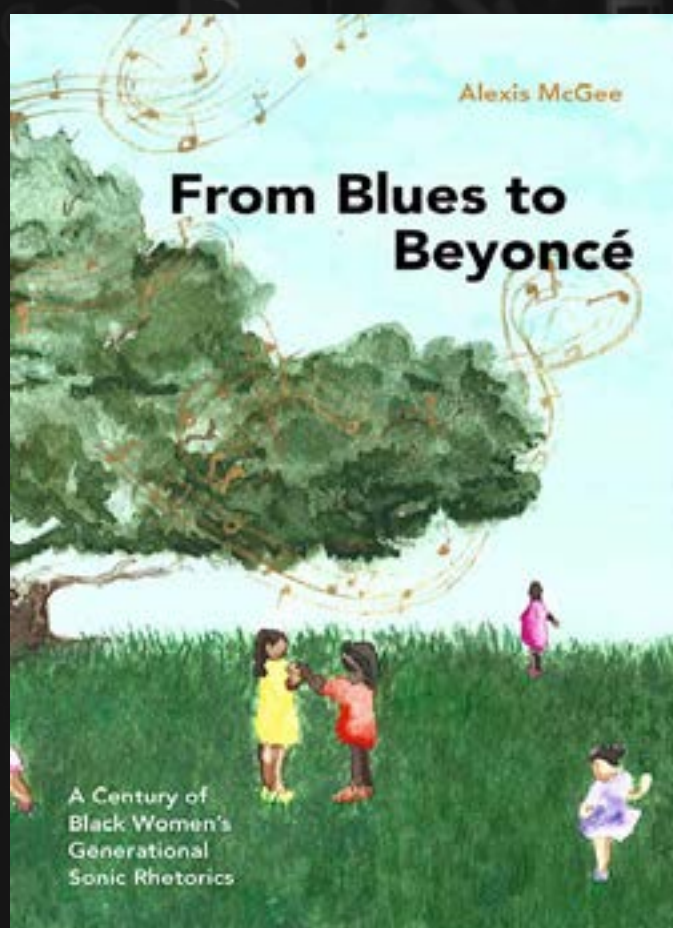
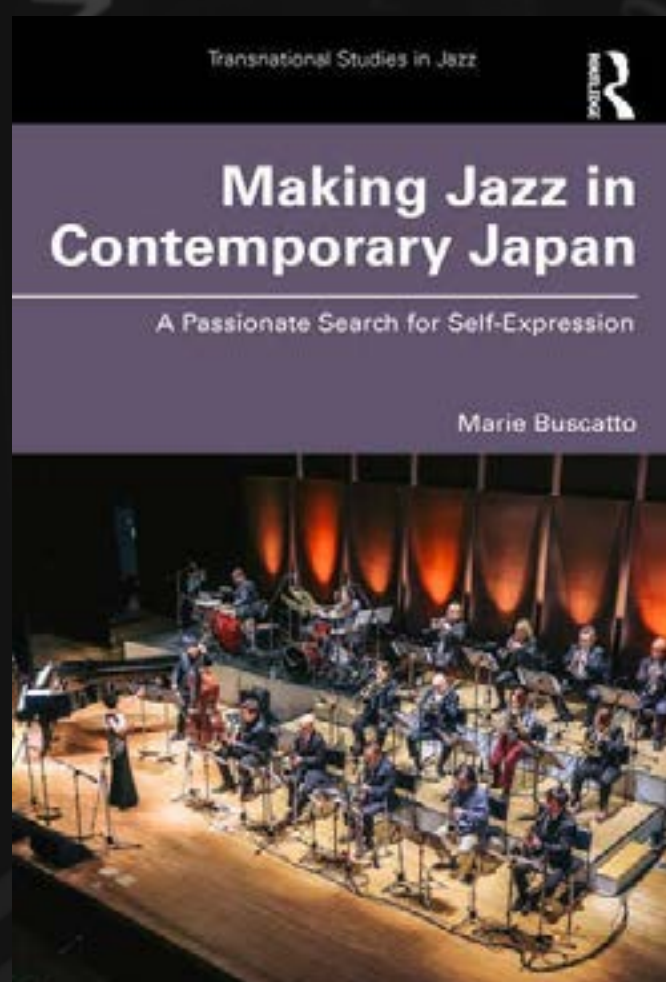
The Women In Jazz Media bookcase is all about platforming female authors from across the world. With almost 100 books, all the books included on our bookcase are also on our physical bookcase and we are very happy to share them with you all.

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
Dr Alexis McGee

Click on the image to go straight to the podcasts!





ON THE Women in Jazz Media PLAYLIST





Audrey Powne by Monika S Jakubowska

BRAD STONE

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

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

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

**CLICK ON THE ALBUMS COVERS
TO PURCHASE AND SUPPORT EACH
ARTIST!**

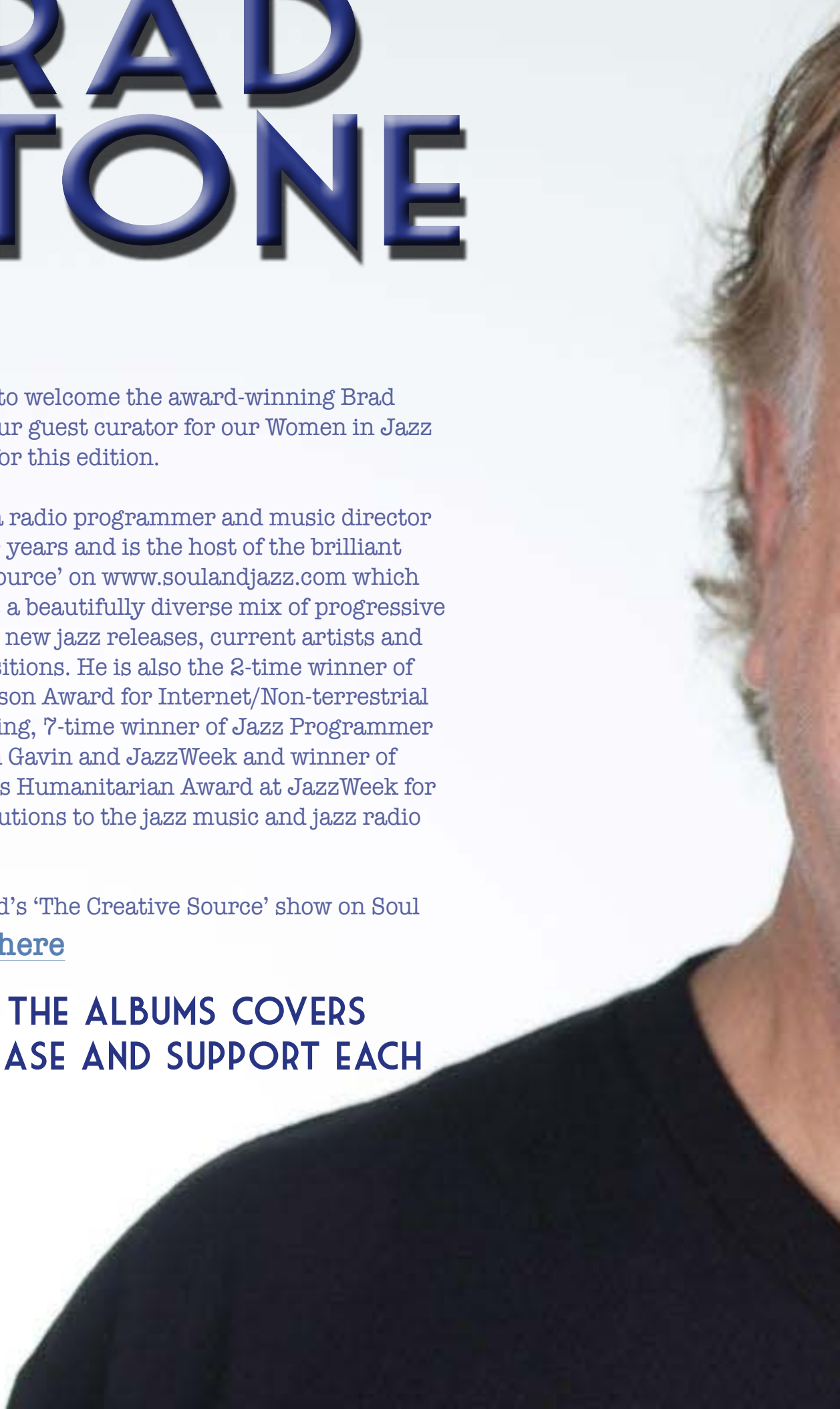
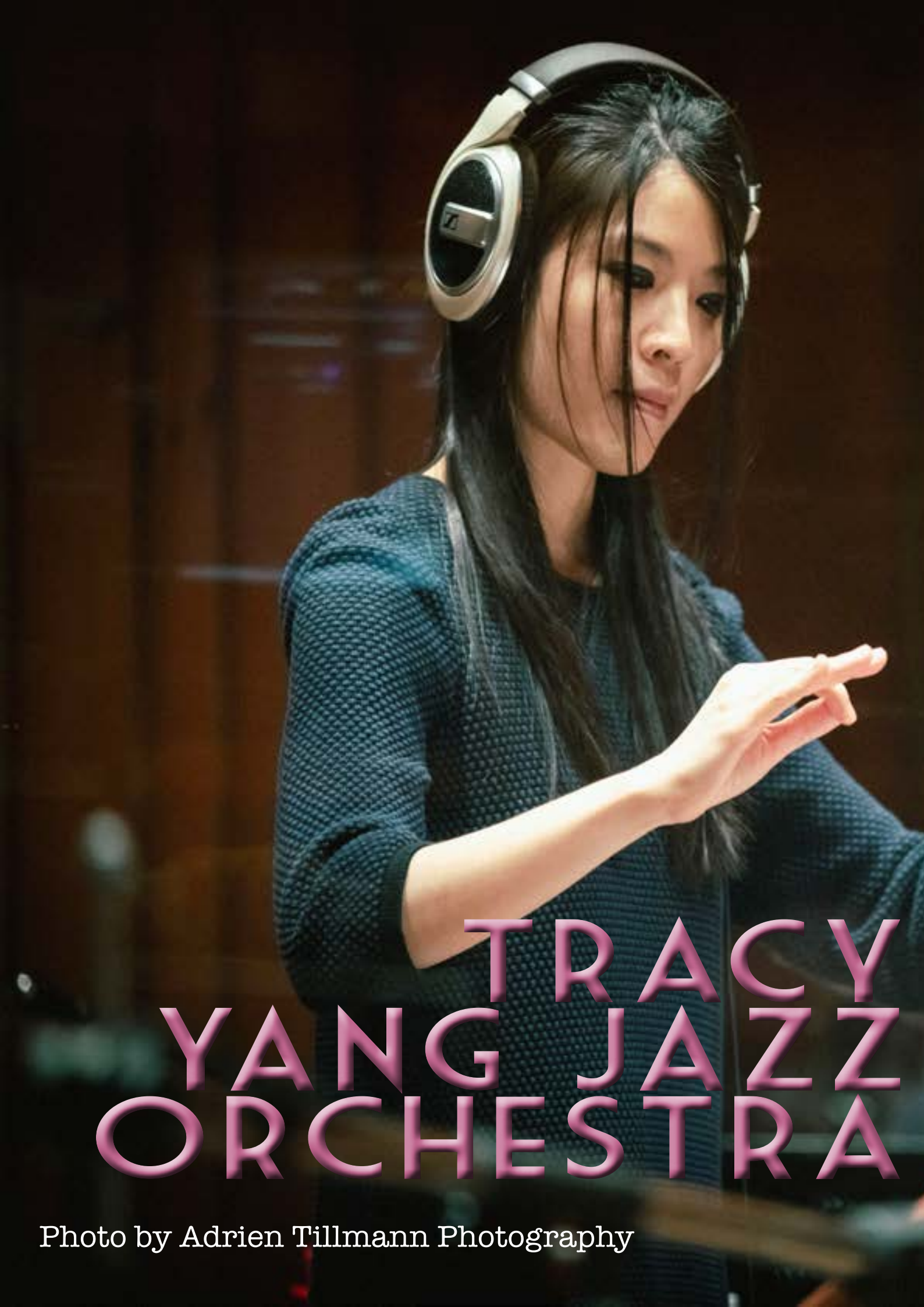




Photo courtesy of Jazz Connect

A woman with long dark hair is wearing large, silver-colored over-ear headphones. She is wearing a dark blue, textured knit sweater. She is looking down and to the right, with her right hand raised and fingers slightly curled in a gesturing motion. The background is dark and out of focus, suggesting an indoor setting with wood paneling.

TRACY YANG JAZZ ORCHESTRA

Photo by Adrien Tillmann Photography



Tracy Yang Jazz Orchestra, “OR” Brooklyn Jazz Underground

I am excited about the number of young jazz composers who are composing and writing wonderful charts for the big band. Originally from Taiwan, Tracy Yang exhibits her brilliance on this new album. The title is an acronym for “operating room”, as she was formerly a radiographer in her native country before deciding to pursue jazz composition and piano. With early mentorship by trombonist Alan Ferber (who also appears on this album), OR is co-produced by the award-winning Darcy James Argue (who I am assuming is also a mentor). The album also includes an impressive coterie of first call NYC artists. She is already the winner of multiple awards for her compositions. Make no mistake about it, Tracy Yang is an extremely talented young woman – I look forward to her future projects while thoroughly enjoying “OR”!

TERI PARKER

Teri Parker's Free Spirits "Peaks and Valleys" Teri Parker Music

Toronto-based pianist and composer Teri Parker leads a septet in this wonderfully inventive nod to pianists Mary Lou Williams and Geri Allen. This, her third album as a leader, includes 2 compositions each by the aforementioned masters, and 5 by Teri. The septet includes alto saxophonist Allison Au, whom we've spotlighted in a past issue. So much good music coming out of Toronto these days!



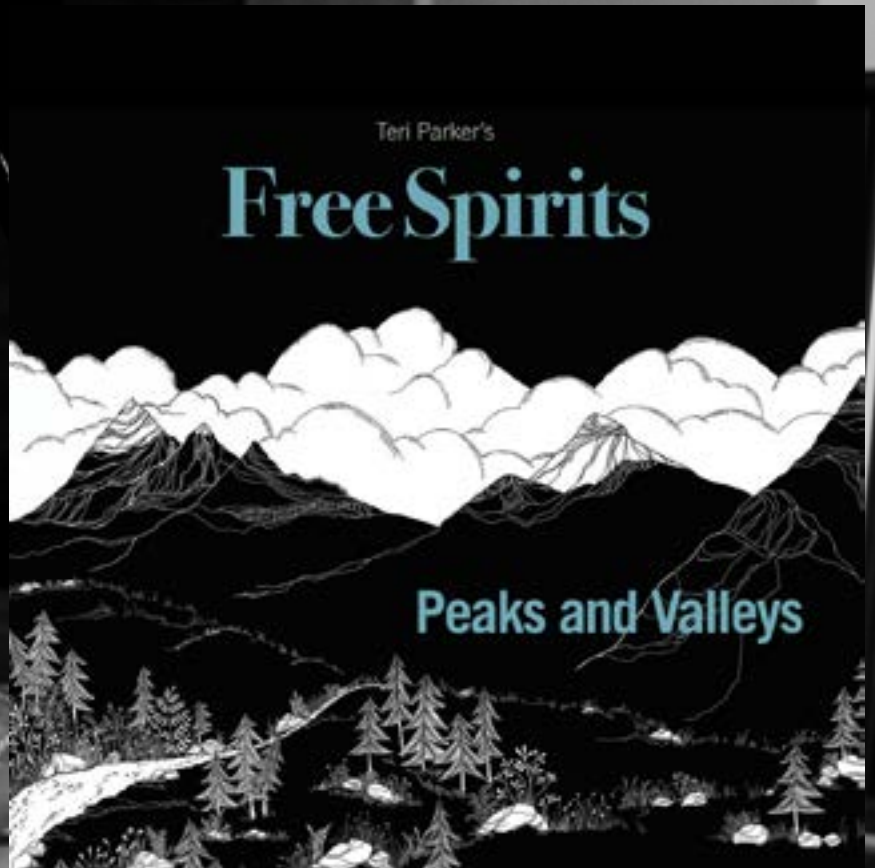
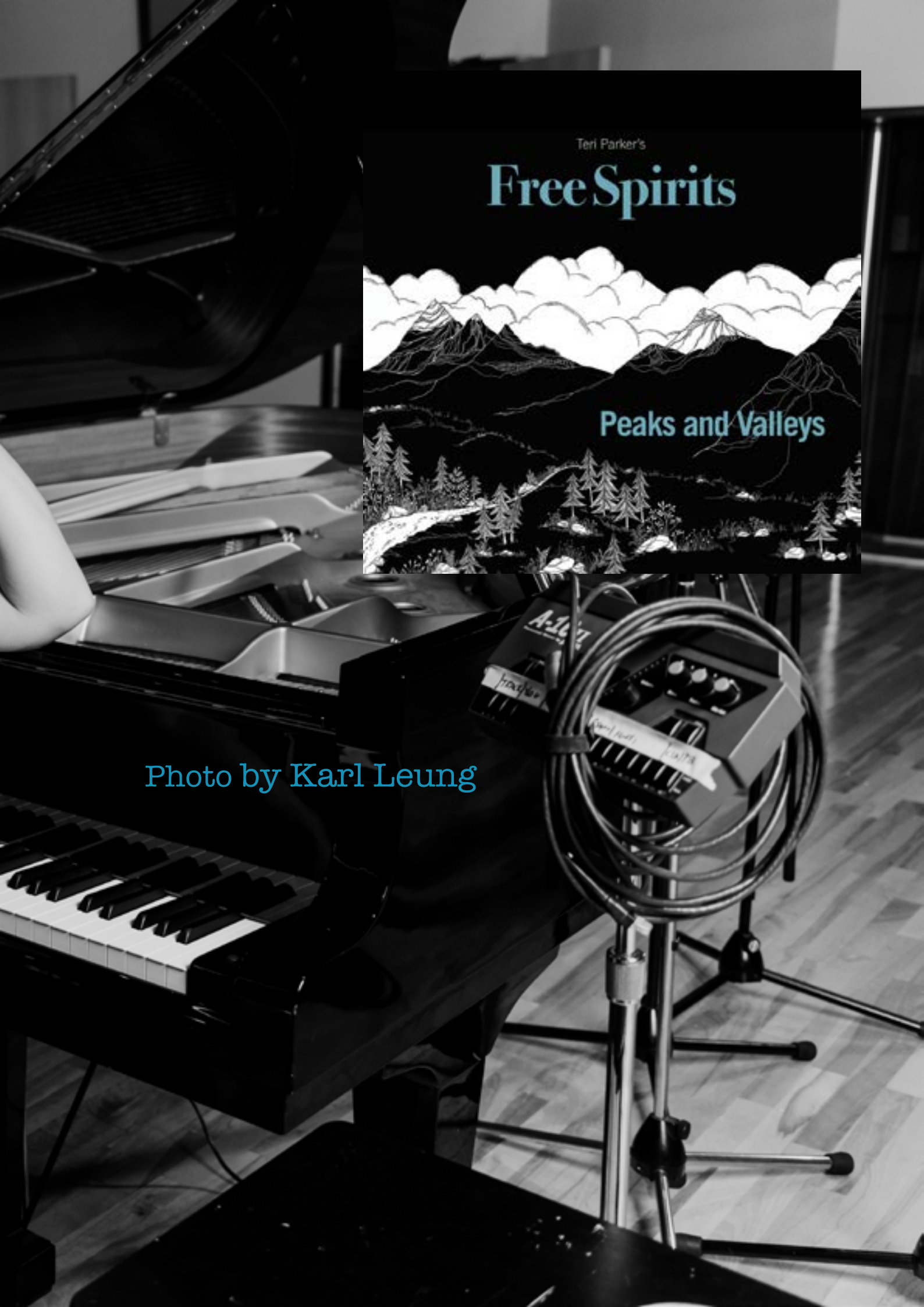


Photo by Karl Leung

HYESEON HONG



Hyeseon Hong Jazz Orchestra
“Things Will Pass”
Pacific Coast Jazz

With the Hyeseon Hong Jazz Orchestra, we have another album by a young composer leading a large ensemble. The compositions are all of her own, and give us a unique blend of contemporary big band, modern jazz and elements of the Eastern music of her own native Korea. If you're a fan of modern big band music by new composers, like I am, I highly recommend that you check this one out! This is her second album, and she certainly is a talented composer and arranger. The future of jazz orchestras is in good hands!

Photo by Deborah Montanez

Photo by Scott Hardy





Photo by Jimmy
Katz



Leslie Pintchik
“Prayer for What Remains” Pintch Hard

I love when musicians, and particularly pianists (my own instrument!) record their own music. On pianist Leslie Pintchik's new album, she once again presents her own compositions. Eight of the ten songs on this album are originals. She's joined by Scott Hardy (bass), Michael Sarin (drums), Satoshi Takeishi (percussion) and Steve Wilson (soprano sax). Pleasant, enjoyable, highly listenable – she definitely has her own voice.

KRISTIN KORB

Kristin Korb
“Sweet Dreams”
Giant Sheep Music

I love the concept of bassist and vocalist Kristin Korb’s new release. The subtitle of this album is “Celebrating the Eurythmics”, and all of the music on the album are songs from that rock/pop band – many of them will undoubtedly be recognizable to you. Kristin is an American, but this album was recorded with her Danish band in Copenhagen. The arrangements are so well done and just seem natural for each number. If you dig the Eurythmics, this album a must! It’s great that rock music is getting covered by jazz artists beyond Lennon and McCartney more often these days.

Photo by Sofie Barfoed





Photo by Alex Jones



TANIA GRUBBS

Tania Grubbs Quintet
The Sound of Love

David Budway
Jeff Grubbs
Ron Affif
James Johnson III



Tania Grubbs Quintet
“The Sound of Love”
Travelin’ Music

Vocalist Tania Grubbs and her quintet really knock it out of the park with their latest release. A nice variety of compositions by many notables. Husband Jeff Grubbs holds down the lower end so capably on bass. Longtime collaborator David Budway seems the perfect accompanist for Tania’s beautiful and pitch perfect vocals. Ron Affif lends some nice colorations on guitar. James Johnson III is superb and never gets in the way. Highlights for me include the Gershwins’ “But Not for Me”, Dave and Iola Brubeck’s “Strange Meadowlark”, Tadd Dameron’s “If You Could See Me Now” and her own composition “The Sculptor’s Hands”.



Photo by Diana Smithers



VANISHA GOULD

Vanisha Gould
“She’s Not Shiny, She’s Not Smooth”
Cellar Music

This is an album that just grew and grew on me the further I listened to it. The title track I think is a good description of Vanisha’s honest and compelling voice. All the compositions on this album are Vanisha’s, which I find most impressive. Her band is just excellent: Chris McCarthy (piano), John Sims (bass), Jongkuk Kim (drums). Superbly recorded and engineered – this album just sounds great! If you’re a fan of jazz vocals, and want to hear something beyond the usual standards, please pick up a copy and give this a listen – you won’t be disappointed!

SARAH HANAHAN



AH HAN

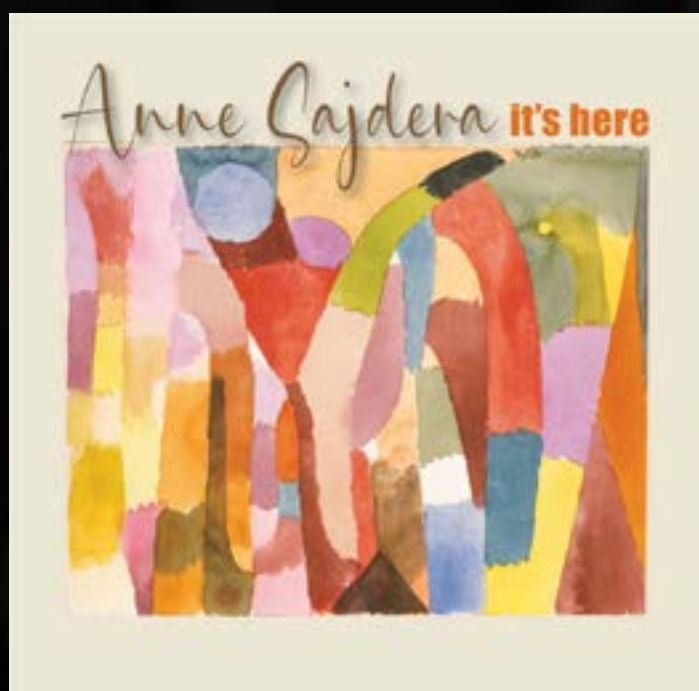
Photo by Lawrence Sumulong



Sarah Hanahan
“Among Giants”
Blue Engine Records

This young American alto saxophonist seems to have burst upon the scene in a big way recently. She’s featured on a other new albums as a side-woman, but here we have her debut release as a leader. Marc Cary on piano, Nat Reeves on bass and Jeff ‘Tain’ Watts on drums – you can’t argue with that lineup, nor would they be lending their considerable talents to just anyone. Sarah does some, in the jazz vernacular, “serious blowing” on her alto sax on this record. A force to be reckoned with, I suspect for years to come!

Photo by Fifi LaRue



ANNE SAJDERA

Anne Sajdera
“it’s here”
Bijuri Records

San Francisco based pianist and composer Anne Sajdera’s new release was certainly welcomed by me. I’ve followed and enjoyed her work for many years, and it has been a few years since she’s released an album – so I was delighted to receive (and give airplay to) this brilliant new one. Deeply seated and schooled in both jazz and European classical music, and borrowing elements from music around the world – Anne’s compositions and arrangements are simply sublime. Featuring a several fine musicians from the S.F. Bay Area, including Mike Olmos, Deszon Claiburne, Gary Brown and others – and expertly mastered by Phil Hawkins (who has become as well known for his great engineering, mixing and mastering as he is for his drumming!).

NUBYA GARCIA



Nubya Garcia
“Odyssey”
Concord Jazz

We’ve come to expect that British tenor saxophonist Nubya Garcia won’t be putting out a standard jazz album, but a literal soundscape. That’s exactly what she does with this new release, “Odyssey”. Featuring 4 vocal tracks (including one by Esperanza Spaulding) and orchestral strings throughout (by the Chineke! Orchestra). Listening to this album will take you through a stunning ‘odyssey’ – you must listen from start to finish!

Photo by Petra Hajska



CORNELIA NILSSON
WHERE DO YOU GO?
AARON PARKS /
DANIEL FRANCH /
GABOR BOLLA



CORNELIA NILSSON

PI

**Cornelia Nilsson,
"Where Do You Go?"
Stunt Records**

Swedish drummer and composer leads this trio (Daniel Franck on drums, Aaron Parks on piano on some tracks, Gabor Bolla on tenor on others) through a well-executed romp through compositions by some of the masters (Monk, Ornette, Bud, etc.) as well as some of her own. Released by the superb Danish label Stunt Records (we radio programmers are delighted that they've wisely decided to service us

hoto by Christer Männikus



MONIKA HERZIG'S SHEROES

Monika Herzig's Sheroes "All in Good Time" ZOHIO

German pianist and keyboardist Monika Herzig was Professor of Music at Indiana University's prestigious School of Music, and has recently taken up residency in Austria. Fortunately she has continued with her band "Sheroes", with Camille Thurman, Leni Stern, Jamie Baum, Rosa Avila, Gina Schwarz and Reut Regev. Featuring mostly her own compositions, a couple by Gina, and a Beyonce tune is also included and nicely arranged and performed. Maestro Lenny White was involved in the production of this album. Modern jazz fusion at its finest!



MONIKA HERZIG SHEROES

ROSA AVILA JAMIE BAUM
REUT REGEV GINA SCHWARZ
LENI STERN CAMILLE THURMAN

ALL
IN
GOOD
TIME

Photo courtesy of Monika Herzig



**Ginetta
Fu
Kickin' V**

This artist goes by Ginetta, but her real name is Ginetta Minichiello. She's known for some. I suspect that the pocket trumpet. Not a few artists have used it, but it's quite fit in one's pocket, but the modern trumpet timbre. Ginetta and her band on "Fun Size", some of her work by others, including Henry Garner and others. The band is Davis'.



GINETTA'S VENDETTA MINI SIZE WICCAN MUSIC

GINETTA M., or just Ginetta, but her real name is Ginetta – I suppose Ginetta is just easier to remember. The title refers to her instrument, the trumpet, a common instrument in jazz, but she and her band have made it their own. It doesn't matter how small it is, but it is indeed smaller in stature than a standard trumpet, and has a somewhat different sound. She and her band feature a nice variety of tunes, including her own compositions as well as those of Duke Ellington, Thelonious Monk, John Coltrane, Miles Davis, and Errol Flynn. She does a superb version of Miles Davis' "All Blues".



Photo by Brooke Trace

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

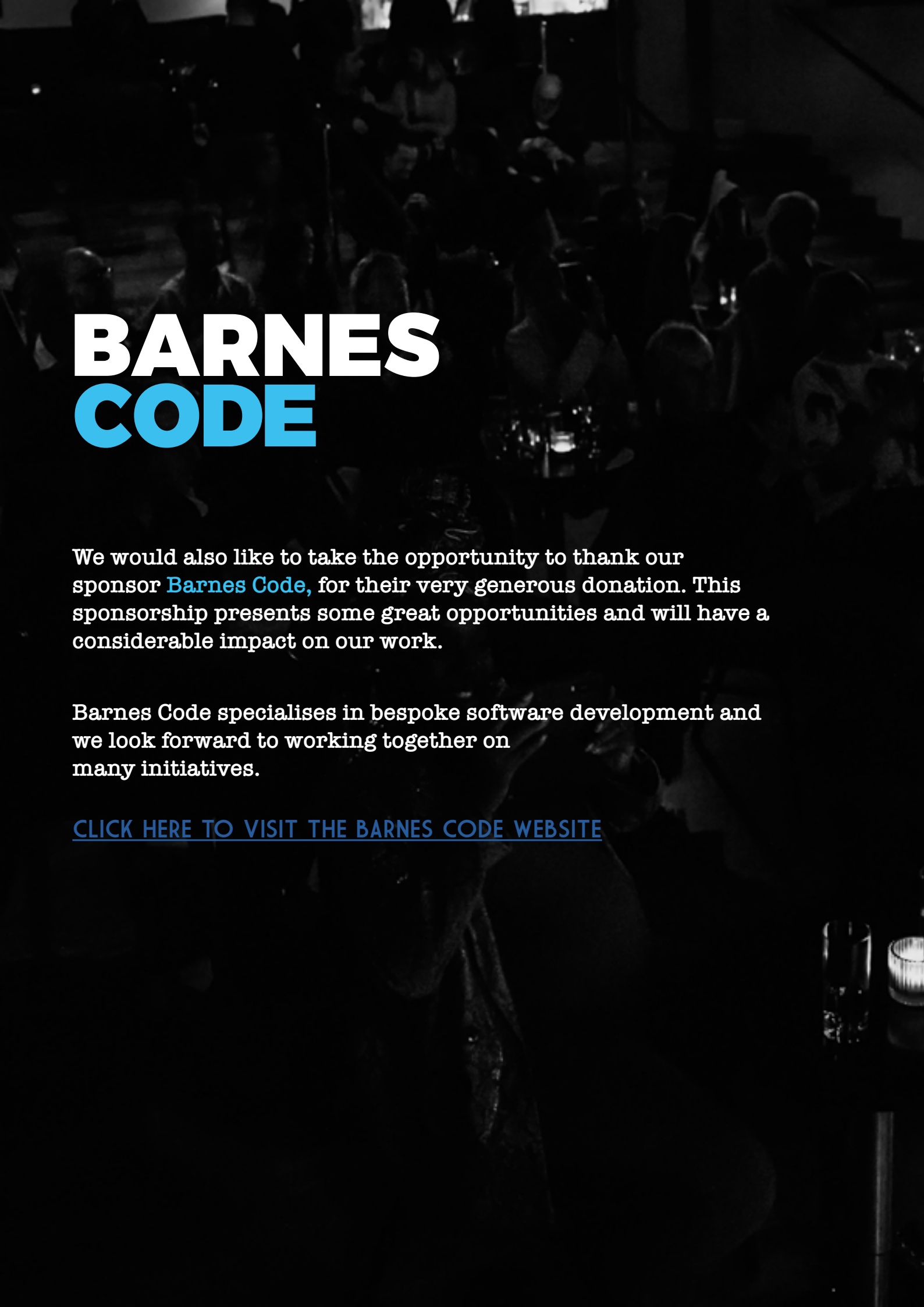
**BLACK
LIVES IN
MUSIC**

JAZZ MEDIA

BLACK LIVES IN MUSIC



PHOTO OF CAMILLA GEORGE BY MONIKA S JAKUBOWSKA



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CLAIRE DALY



Photo by Enid Farber