

Rachel Z



The stunning Rachel Z and her piano trio has audiences captivated from the moment they hit their seats. With recording and performing credits including Peter Gabriel, Al DiMeola, Wayne Shorter, Steps Ahead, and Stanley Clarke, Rachel's magnificent and exquisite song poems are beautiful and demanding.

Manhattan-born and raised Rachel Nicolazzo (aka Rachel Z) had music practically ingrained in her genetic code. Groomed to follow in her mother's operatic footsteps, she began voice lessons at two, started classical piano lessons at seven and attended the opera by age nine. "Then I heard *Miles Smiles*."

Listening to Herbie Hancock's harmonies over Wayne Shorter's compositions help-

ed her bridge the gap from her classical training to jazz. Rachel Z graduated from the New England Conservatory with a "Distinction in Performance" award.

While performing and recording steadily with the classic fusion band Steps Ahead from 1988 through 1996, she also worked with Al DiMeola, Larry Coryell, Special EFX, and Angela Bofill.

Her connection to saxophone great Wayne Shorter grew from major influence to full-blown collaborator over the two years she worked on his 1995 hit comeback album *High Life*, for which she built a synthesized orchestral framework to crystallize his musical vision. The CD won a Grammy for Best Contemporary Jazz Album.

Rachel's latest CD *Grace* is her debut release on the highly acclaimed Chesky label. The album is also significant as it debuts the formidable vocal talents of this acclaimed pianist who was trained as a classical singer from childhood. *Grace* continues a Rachel Z tradition of combining beautifully crafted original songs with stunningly innovative arrangements of cover songs drawn from the rock and pop worlds. On *Grace* Rachel selects songs by U2, Nirvana, Kate Bush, Björk and John Lennon to mix with her own compositions binding the ten tracks of the album with spare arrangements and universal themes encompassing love, pain and growth.

In addition to extensive touring and recording, Rachel Z is currently an instructor of Jazz Theory and The Jazz Improvisation Ensemble at New School University in New York City.

"New York-born pianist Rachel Nicolazzo, nicknamed Rachel Z, is one of the more musically open-minded "young lions" to have emerged from the 1990s."

Eugene Holley Jr.
Amazon.com

"Rachel Z is a consistently adventurous player. Rachel occasionally reveals traces of influence from McCoy Tyner and Herbie Hancock, but more often she is her own player, voicing her harmonies with a dark, intimate quality."

Don Heckman
The Los Angeles Times

Ms. Z is managing to make the age-old piano trio combo sound relevant and fresh to younger ears. And she's made this improbable connection without sacrificing her artistry or forsaking her own connection to the jazz piano legacy of Bud Powell, Wynton Kelly, Ahmad Jamal, Bill Evans, McCoy Tyner, and Herbie Hancock.

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