



**2007/2008**

**Master Clinics and Master Performances**



**Rachel Z**

# 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 helped 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.

**Bill Milkowski**  
**Contributor to *Jazz Times* and *Jazziz* magazines**

# **Unlocking the Harmonic Keys to Improvising over Modern Traditional Jazz Standards and the Creation of New Jazz Standards**

## **A Master Class by Rachel Z**

With Bobbie Rae (drums) and Maeve Royce (bass)

### **Subjects covered:**

1. Improvisation over complex harmonic tunes (Wayne Shorter, Herbie Hancock, Joe Henderson)
2. Creating pentatonics, hexatonic, and diminished lines
3. Rhythm Section playing in the modern jazz style and maintaining authentic jazz swing
4. Developing interaction in the rhythm section
5. Creating arrangements on the spot fusing rock, pop, or hip hop songs with modern or traditional jazz feels from standards.

### **A. Improvisation in the Modern Jazz Style**

Emphasis will be put on phrasing harmonically and melodically in the modern jazz style taking into consideration the different chordal non-functional tune structures .

### **B. New Jazz Standards Played with Swing, Funk, and Rock Hybrid Rhythms**

We will apply what we did in the first part of our lesson to developing New Jazz Standards, and create the fusion between Jazz ,Latin American rhythms, funk and rock. For example, we will pick any tune from the rock and pop repertoire and play it in the jazz style-applying sophisticated jazz harmony under the pop melodies to create a challenging new standard! We will also discuss the aesthetic aspect, which should be considered when mixing different styles of music.

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### **C. Arranging on the Spot**

We will try to create a short arrangement, with a chart brought from the students of one of their favorite tunes. We will create a form and structure as we play. The purpose of this exercise is to be able to communicate through spontaneous improvisation, exploring a road we don't know; yet creating a new piece that blends a familiar jazz song with a modern pop or rock favorite from the class

### **D. Rhythm Section Playing in the Modern Styles**

We will observe the various parts played by each instrument of the rhythm section in different styles, and how they relate to each other.

### **E. Piano Technique**

Miss Z will discuss with students any questions about the instrument, including touch and technique.

### **Duration**

- 1.5 hours
- Three Day Master Class also available (ideal)

### **Performances**

- The Rachel Z Trio
- Rachel Z with College Ensembles

### **Rachel Z Represented By**



**Steve Frumkin**  
330-405-9075



**Jim Wadsworth**  
216-721-5624

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