



presents

# Lizz Wright

Thursday • 21 March 2019

Lizz Wright • Vocals

Bobby Sparks • Piano, Organ

Adam Levy • Guitar

Ben Zwerin • Bass

Michael Jerome Moore • Drums

## About the Artist

Lizz Wright was born in 1980, in the small town of Hahira, Georgia. Her father was minister and musical director of her local church, and her early singing was steeped in the gospel tradition. She later added blues and jazz to her musical palette and studied voice at Georgia State University in Atlanta. In 1999, she sat in on a jam session at the Atlanta Jazz Festival, and when, after she sang the only two jazz standards she knew, the audience asked for more, she responded with a spellbinding version of 'Amazing Grace'. Her performance led to her introduction in 2000 to the gospel vocal quartet In the Spirit, which was soon hailed as the best jazz group in the city.

Around the same time, Wright appeared with Lou Rawls, Dianne Reeves (who has also performed for the Waltons World Masters Series) and others at Billie Holiday tribute concerts in Los Angeles and Chicago, and her poised, mature performance stole the show. 'Lizz Wright walked on stage at the Hollywood Bowl last summer a virtual unknown. Fifteen minutes later, she walked off a star', wrote Don Heckman in a 2003 article for the *Los Angeles Times*.

Wright's first recording was with the late pianist and composer Joe Sample (1939-2014), for his 2002 album, *The Pecan Tree* (Verve). In the following year, at the age of 23, she recorded her own critically acclaimed debut album, *Salt* (Verve). The musicians who recorded it with her – including Brian Blade (drums), Danilo Perez (piano) and Chris Potter (saxophone) – indicate the stature she had already attained in the jazz world.

*Dreaming Wide Awake* (Verve Forecast) followed in 2005. An eclectic album, it showcased Wright's range and included songs such as 'A Taste of Honey', covered by both the Beatles and Herb Alpert and the Tijuana Brass, which she took in an entirely different blues-gospel direction; 'I'm Confessin', a song from the Tin Pan Alley era which she reworked into soulful ballad; and the title track 'Dreaming Wide Awake', an original by Wright featuring the great Bill Frisell on guitar. 'Behind the gorgeous voice, the poise, the presence, you hear the tenderness of her heart and the soul-stirring sincerity.' (*OffBeat*)

And after making a guest appearance on the Toots Thielemans album *One More for the Road* in 2006, Wright released her third album, *The Orchard* (Verve Forecast), in 2008. A *Guardian* review remarked on 'her gift of making you stop whatever you're doing to listen'.

In 2010, she recorded *Fellowship*, a powerful return to her gospel roots that featured guest performances from kindred spirits Me'Shell Ndegéocello and Angélique Kidjo (who has also performed for the Waltons World Masters Series). 'An album that trades in questions of reverence and the careful consideration of the drive to believe in higher authorities, *Fellowship* is a testament to the power and relevance of gospel music when it's approached with intelligence and grace.' (*Slant*)



In 2015, Wright released *Freedom & Surrender* (Concord), which included versions of Nick Drake's 'River Man' and the Bee Gees' 'To Love Somebody'. 'Like Wright's previous albums, *Freedom & Surrender* is graceful and exacting, yet those qualities come across in a fashion that does not seem deliberate – remarkable for material that draws from folk, blues, jazz, soul and gospel and often fuses two or more of those genres'. (*AllMusic*)

*Grace* (Concord, 2017), Wright's latest recording, is an acclaimed and compelling combination of Appalachian earthiness and big-city cool, created with the Grammy Award winning producer Joe Henry. The *Guardian* called it 'a potent, sanctified album'. And according to *JazzTimes*, 'Lizz Wright has reached a musical maturity – stylistically, interpretively, emotionally – that places her at the forefront of American jazz vocalists.'

In each of her performances and recordings, Lizz Wright has displayed the extraordinary ability to move with ease across different traditions and make each of them her own. A *PopMatters* review of *The Orchard* described her as 'a skilled alchemist who refuses to let one genre have the final word. Spirituals, gospel, folk, country, and rock inhabit the same space in her sonic and existential world.' And a recent NPR profile called her 'a sophisticated straddler of down-home blues, jazz, gospel, folk, southern pop and confessional singer-songwriter traditions'. We call her unique.

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## Past Performances

Tigran Hamasyan + Special Guests (2019) • Maya Youssef (2018) • Susana Baca (2017) • Tigran Hamasyan – Solo (2017)  
Anoushka Shankar (2016) • The Hot Sardines (2016) • Tigran Hamasyan & Yerevan Chamber Choir – Luys i Luso (2015)  
Le Trio Joubran (2015) • Habib Koité Group (2015) • Camerata Flamenco Project (2014) • Hugh Masekela (2014)  
Toumani & Sidiki Diabaté (2014) • The Blind Boys of Alabama (2014) • Tigran Hamasyan Trio (2014)  
Soweto Gospel Choir (2013) • Branford Marsalis Quartet (2013) • Bobby McFerrin Meets Ireland (2013)  
Sierra Leone's Refugee All Stars (2013) • Mavis Staples (2012) • Juan de Marcos & The Afro-Cuban All Stars (2012)  
Tinariwen (2012) • Tigran Hamasyan – Solo (2012) • Ana Moura (2012) • Jan Garbarek & The Hilliard Ensemble (2011)  
Chucho Valdés & The Afro-Cuban Messengers (2011) • Ladysmith Black Mambazo (2011)  
Juan Martín Flamenco Dance Ensemble (2011) • The Blind Boys of Alabama (2011) • Angélique Kidjo (2010) • Mariza (2010)  
Jean-Luc Ponty Quartet (2009) • Zakir Hussain & Masters of Percussion (2009) • Habib Koité & Bamada (2009)  
Bobby McFerrin – Solo (2008) • Dee Dee Bridgewater – Red Earth Project (2008) • Soweto Gospel Choir (2008)  
Spanish Harlem Orchestra (2008) • Branford Marsalis Quartet (2007) • Preservation Hall Jazz Band (2007)  
McCoy Tyner Septet (2006) • Buena Vista Social Club (2006) • Dianne Reeves – Strings Attached (2006)  
Bobby McFerrin – Solo (2005) • Wayne Shorter Quartet (2005) • Take 6 (2005) • Dianne Reeves Quartet (2004)  
Juan Martín – Arte Flamenco Puro (2003) • Trilok Gurtu Group (2003)