

**Outpost of Dreams**  
Norma Winstone/Kit Downes (ECM)  
by Ken Dryden

English vocalist Norma Winstone (who celebrates her 84th birthday this month) has had a long, productive career, although North American jazz fans have had only sporadic access to her albums, since few of them, excepting her near two-decade-long recording relationship with ECM, have been widely distributed outside of Europe. Winstone was 81 at the time of recording her latest ECM release, *Outpost of Dreams*, with English pianist Kit Downes, who proves to be a perfect match for the expressive singer. His lush chords are more than accompaniment—they are a collaboration with this gifted singer. And though her voice has deepened a little over many decades, she retains a rich, captivating tone with expressive diction and the ability to bring out the emotions of each song.

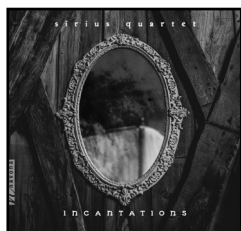
Five of the ten numbers feature music composed by Downes with lyrics by Winstone. “El” is a magical opening track, blending her poetry with his sensitive, majestic piano. “Fly The Wind” was written by the late English pianist John Taylor, Winstone’s former husband and musical partner. This breezy vehicle showcases her soaring, spacious lyric and a bit of playful scatting. Her mysterious lyric to guitarist Ralph Towner’s “Beneath an Evening Sky” proves haunting, leaving the listener guessing if the union ended by death or departure. “Out of The Dancing Sea” is a work by Scottish fiddler Aidan O’Rourke and Winstone. She showcases her still strong upper vocal range and her lyrics are a perfect fit. “The Steppe”, another collaboration with Downes, opens with a wordless introduction and Winstone once again stuns with the range of emotion. “Nocturne” is the most abstract of the duo’s collaborations, with the pianist’s dissonant chords providing inspiration for an equally adventurous vocal. The centuries old song “Black Is the Colour [sic]” has been recorded many times by jazz vocalists, though this dramatic, powerful interpretation takes more than its fair share of successful risks. The duo’s “In Search of Sleep”, with Winstone’s spoken words, is a marriage of a pensive theme with many twists, and the feeling of suffering a night of insomnia, with a fitting, abrupt conclusion.

*Outpost of Dreams* is an essential addition to Norma Winstone’s discography, although the rather brief 41-minute length of this rewarding duo meeting leaves the listener wanting more.

For more info visit [ecmrecords.com](http://ecmrecords.com)



**Free Fall**  
Fung Chern Hwei’s Fungal Bloom (Adhyāropa)  
*Incantations*  
Sirius Quartet (s/r)  
by Elijah Shiffer



Hwei shows that he is very much this kind of player, as each album showcases him in a completely different, equally exciting ensemble.

*Free Fall* is the debut of the Fungal Bloom trio, featuring Fung alongside Shawn Lovato (bass) and Colin Hinton (drums). It’s a well-named album, full of intense yet playful free improvisation with a wide-open sound. The chordless trio setting means that each instrument takes up a very well-defined niche in the sonic space, but the three players are clearly listening closely to each other. Of the eight tracks, the title track is surprisingly one of the few with a well-defined theme and solos—though these are no less free than the rest of the album. There’s plenty of melody in everyone’s improvising, even Hinton’s; this is especially true of “Yellow Cow” and “Headless Chicken” with their folk-song simplicity. “Flakes” is a bit more textural; the interplay of violin and bass bowing is one of the album’s most fascinating moments. The leader switches to viola for the final track, Anaïs Mitchell’s “We Raise Our Cups” from the Broadway musical *Hadestown* (in whose band Fung also plays); it’s a refreshing dose of tonality and groove after all the abstraction.

The Sirius Quartet finds Fung among like-minded string players—Gregor Huebner (violin), Sunjay Jayaram (viola), Jeremy Harman (cello)—and proves equally adept at ensemble playing, improvising and composing. The quartet’s latest album, *Incantations*, features pieces by each member (three by Harman and two by each of the others), which are united by several common threads, regardless of the composer. Many share a similar form, combining intricately-arranged rhythmic themes with open-ended solo sections to create a unique sound that is equal parts jazz and minimalism. Fung’s compositions stand out for their dramatic, yet gradual shifts of tempo and mood. The album pays tribute to ancestors of all kinds, from individual mentors to historically marginalized peoples, including the most powerful track, which is Huebner’s “Chant Pour l’Île Gorée”, named for an island off Africa’s westernmost point (infamous for its significance to the transatlantic slave trade). This piece begins with a monumental litany of call-and-response on a single ornamented pitch, before breaking into a somber lament of a theme, which fits its subject perfectly.

For more info visit [adhyaroparecords.com](http://adhyaroparecords.com) and [siriusquartet.com](http://siriusquartet.com). Fung Chern Hwei is at Owl Music Parlor Sep. 14 (with Michael Bates Acrobat). See Calendar.



**Live at Vic's**  
Nicole Zuraitis and Friends (La Reserve)  
by Jim Motavalli

“Hello Las Vegas! We’re so happy to be here at Vic’s,” Nicole Zuraitis begins her double album, *Live at Vic’s*, and with that, launches into an atypical song for a jazz vocalist—Preston “Red” Foster’s “Got My Mojo Working”. That she makes this blues work, with the addition of scat, is a sign of her versatility. Zuraitis is possessed of a powerful, full-bodied vocal instrument and she employs it across a wide spectrum. Featuring the two-time GRAMMY-winner’s working group—Idan Morim (guitar), Samuel Weber (bass) and Dan Pugach (drums) along with guests: trumpeter Keyon Harrold (who brings the house down on “Mojo”), organist Rachel Eckroth and veteran studio musician, saxophonist Tom Scott (who also co-produced)—the

live session is a relaxed one, giving plenty of solo time to the assembled crew.

With “The Nearness of You” (Carmichael, Washington) she’s back in the songbook, but takes it at a faster tempo than usual. Weber quotes “Twisted” in his exemplary solo, and Morim is in a swinging groove, with Zuraitis scatting to his strings. The leader’s “All Stars Lead to You” is in the pop realm, with Scott taking on the role he played regularly as a member of the L.A. Express with Joni Mitchell, but here with a longer than usual solo. Eckroth and Harrold are fiery, at length, all contributing to this 11+ minute track. The much-recorded “Pure Imagination” (Newley, Bricusse) is treated with subdued respect by the singer. “That’s the quietest Las Vegas has ever been!” she declares at the end. Her dramatic version of Dolly Parton’s “Jolene” is a show-stopper, taking liberal license with the original arrangement and wringing every ounce of emotion from the desperate story. The drumming of Pugach, veering through country, jazz, even military rhythms, deserves special credit, as does Harrold’s impassioned trumpet performance in a long instrumental break.

A version of Stevie Nicks’ “Rhiannon” sticks closer to the original. But Jimmy Webb’s “Wichita Lineman”, with some bright playing from Morim, sounds like it was always supposed to be jazz in her hands. Zuraitis’ “Middle C”, which she wrote with Billy Seidman, declares she likes her man like she likes her notes, “not too high and not too low.” It’s a future songbook standard, reminiscent of the originals that Canadian singer Caity Gyorgy is writing now. Ditto the artist’s insanely catchy “The Coffee Song”, which is largely backed by Weber’s bass playing. Zuraitis initially essays Thelonious Monk’s “Round Midnight” with just piano backing (before Harrold and Eckroth eventually come in) and it’s great—she could make a whole album this way. The release’s penultimate tune is a challenge: it’s

## RECOMMENDED NEW RELEASES

- Lucian Ban, John Surman, Mat Maneri—*The Athenaeum Concert* (Sunnyside)
- Patricia Brennan—*Of The Near and Far* (Pyroclastic)
- Peter Brötzmann, Jason Adasiewicz, Steve Noble, John Edwards—*The Quartet: Cafe Oto, London (Feb. 10 & 11, 2023)* (Otoroku)
- Eric Ineke JazzXpress (feat. Tineke Postma)—*Swing Street: Plays The Music of Cannonball Adderley* (Timeless)
- Anat Fort—*The Dreamworld of Paul Motian* (Sunnyside)
- Hinode Tapes & Hiroki Chiba—*ITA* (Instant Classic)
- I Hold The Lion’s Paw—*Potentially Interesting Jazz Music* (Earshift Music)
- Sheila Jordan—*Portrait Now* (Dot Time)
- Peter Knight—*TL; DR* (*Too Long; Didn’t Read*) (Earshift Music)
- Branford Marsalis Quartet—*Belonging* (Blue Note)
- Eric McPherson—*Double Bass Quartet - Live* (Giant Step Arts)
- The Necks—*Disquiet* (Northern Spy)
- Kristen Noguès/John Surman—*Diriaou* (Souffle Continu)
- Linda May Han Oh—*Strange Heavens* (Biophilia)
- Scheen Jazzorkester & Fredrik Ljungkvist—*FRAMAT!* (Grong)
- Smooth Elevator (Will Bernard, Danilo Gallo, Giole Pagliaccia)—*Moving Target* (Losen)
- Mark Solborg Tungemål—*:Confluencia* (ILK Music)
- Dwight Trible—*Nocturnal Romance—Noir* (Katalyst Entertainment)
- Webber/Morris Big Band—*Unseparate* (Out Of Your Head)
- Cory Weeds—*Meets Jerry Weldon* (Cellar Music)