

NEWS RELEASE  
For immediate release

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**Pianist/composer/vocalist Deanna Witkowski releases her fourth recording,  
*From This Place*, April 7 on her own Tilapia Records label**

featuring Donny McCaslin, soprano and tenor sax; John Patitucci, acoustic and electric  
bass; and Scott Latzky, drums  
with guest vocalists Laila Biali, Peter Eldridge, and Kate McGarry

*Witkowski has combined the spirituality of the soul and heart with the spirituality of  
jazz...she continues the work of Mary Lou Williams who was the first major jazz artist  
to compose for liturgical purposes. This music is 'healing to the soul'.*

-Rev. Peter F. O'Brien, SJ, Executive Director of The Mary Lou Williams Foundation

*Witkowski's playing is consistently thrilling, and her musical imagination seems  
boundless.*

-Rick Anderson, *All Music Guide*

Continuing in a tradition while pioneering new ways of viewing the world around them has always been the daily work of artists, whether they be jazz musicians or religious mystics. In the case of pianist/composer/vocalist Deanna Witkowski, the disciplined paths of living as a jazz musician and as a person of faith have converged in her beautiful, genre-defying fourth recording, *From This Place*. Marrying ancient and modern sacred texts with the richness of jazz, Witkowski has saved her most honest and soulful music for this new release. Not since Mary Lou Williams has there been a pianist who has melded jazz and liturgy into such a joyous, accessible art form that will appeal across generational, stylistic, and religious divides.

*From This Place* finds Witkowski leading a core quartet, with Donny McCaslin on soprano and tenor sax, John Patitucci on acoustic and electric bass, and Scott Latzky on drums. Her previously documented wide-ranging stylistic and emotional palette is broadened by the addition of guest vocalists Laila Biali, Peter Eldridge (of the New York Voices), and 2009 Grammy-nominated Kate McGarry. With an emphasis on breathing new life into texts ranging from nineteenth-century hymn writers, the Mass, scriptures, and her own pen, Witkowski shows another side of her considerable talent: a stunning gift to find the essence of a text and to translate that essence into sound; and a contemplative, open spirit as an original lyricist.

The varied textures on *From This Place* will actively engage listeners, whether they are jazz fans or have little background in jazz: "Let My Prayer Rise" brings an earthy blues feel to a psalm; "Gloria," "Agnus Dei," and "Keep in Mind" feature intricate four-part harmony; and "O, the Deep, Deep Love" provides an inspired trio adaptation of a nineteenth-century hymn tune. Witkowski's original lyrics contribute to two of the most stunning tracks on the album: "Never Before" abandons instruments in a three-part women's *a cappella* piece featuring Kate McGarry and Laila Biali; while "From This Place" features the quartet in a through-composed work that, with its naked vulnerability and sweeping dynamic range, offers a glance into Mary Magdalene's tumultuous emotional landscape on Easter morning.

Witkowski is keenly aware of other jazz musicians who have blended jazz and sacred texts. In 2007, she teamed with Mary Lou Williams historian, Dr. Tammy Kernodle, to present *Moving with the Spirit: The Sacred Jazz of Mary Lou Williams* at Saint Peter's Church in New York City. This original project has also been presented at Duke University and at the International Association for Jazz Education conference, and is the official educational component of the May 2009 Mary Lou Williams Women in Jazz Festival.

Witkowski's previous three releases, *Length of Days* (2005), *Wide Open Window* (2003), and *Having to Ask* (2000) clearly demonstrated her prowess as "one of the best of the new generation of jazz pianists" (*Jazz Journal International*) and showcased her rich fusions of jazz, Brazilian, and Afro-Cuban music. Her "consistently thrilling playing" (*All Music Guide*) was publicly confirmed in 2002 when she won the Great American Jazz Piano Competition. Subsequent invitations to appear on National Public Radio's *Weekend Edition Sunday* and *Marian McPartland's Piano Jazz* followed in 2003.

Witkowski continues to perform in a wide variety of venues, as is apparent from her 2009 itinerary: On a recent Chicago tour, her trio shared a double bill with the John Patitucci Duo in concert; participated in a university panel on the intersection of art and faith; gave a rhythm section clinic at a community college; and played in worship services at an Episcopal church. Public radio is again taking note of Witkowski's diverse audience base: On April 12 (Easter Sunday), Ms. Witkowski will make a return appearance on *Weekend Edition Sunday*; and later in the year, she will be a featured guest on *Interfaith Voices*. In addition to her active performance schedule, Witkowski is also taking the time to create fully notated piano parts for musicians who want to play her music in their own settings. A corresponding songbook to *From This Place* will be available for download in April at [deannajazz.com](http://deannajazz.com).

Witkowski's never-ending curiosity and love of other cultures has allowed her to extend her fan base to Brazil: Fluent in Portuguese, she has toured twice in the country, most recently appearing at the Recife Jazz Festival. Her travels have also led to performances at the Tel Aviv Opera House and Espaço Bis in Rio de Janeiro. She spent the summer of 2004 touring internationally as the pianist for vocalist Lizz Wright, and since 2006 has been the pianist in the BMI/New York Jazz Composers Orchestra, led by Jim McNeely. She holds a M.A. in jazz piano performance from the City College of New York and a B.M. in classical piano performance from Wheaton College (IL).

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