

NEWS RELEASE

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Mary Lou Williams biographer Dr. Tammy Kernodle and pianist/composer Deanna Witkowski present *Moving with the Spirit: The Sacred Jazz of Mary Lou Williams*, Sunday, October 19, 2008 at Duke University, Durham, NC

Witkowski's playing is consistently thrilling, and her musical imagination seems boundless. -All Music Guide

Kernodle writes about Mary Lou Williams with clarity and force.

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

Biographer Dr. Tammy Kernodle and New York based pianist/composer/vocalist Deanna Witkowski will present ***Moving with the Spirit: The Sacred Jazz of Mary Lou Williams***, a program devoted to the sacred jazz works of both Mary Lou Williams and Witkowski, on Sunday, October 19, 2008 at 11 am at the Searle Conference Center/Commons Restaurant on the campus of Duke University in Durham, NC. The \$25 admission includes brunch and is open to the public. For more information, contact the Mary Lou Williams Center at 919.684.3814 or go to deannajazz.com.

Bassist Dave Ambrosio and drummer Scott Latzky will join Witkowski in musical performances featuring Williams' and Witkowski's sacred jazz. Kernodle will address Williams' contribution to the redefining of the Mass in the post-Vatican II years, and Witkowski will discuss how she has used her compositions in a myriad of denominations and worship scenarios.

The brilliant pianist/composer Mary Lou Williams (1910-1981) often stated that she wanted to be a force for emotional healing through her music. In the 1960s, Williams, who was always one step ahead of innovations in jazz, began focusing on music composition for the Catholic church. Her service music inspired Duke Ellington to write his own *Sacred Concerts*, yet differed from Ellington's work in that her pieces were meant to be used in actual services, rather than solely in concert settings. Williams' transition to composing for the church marked a seven year period that corresponded with liturgical changes within the Catholic church. From 1963 until 1970 she composed a number of hymns and three masses that garnered attention within the American Catholic church as well as from the Vatican. In 1975, jazz was played for the first time in New York's St. Patrick's Cathedral, when Williams performed her work *Mary Lou's Mass* with her trio and a 60-voice youth choir.

Witkowski/Kernodle bios

Winner of the 2002 Great American Jazz Piano Competition and a past guest on Marian McPartland's *Piano Jazz*, pianist/composer/vocalist **Deanna Witkowski** has been heralded for her "consistently thrilling" playing and her "boundless imagination" (*All Music Guide*). Her brand new fourth release, *From This Place*, focuses on her sacred jazz material with musicians including Donny McCaslin and John Patitucci.

Ms. 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. She has appeared twice on National Public Radio's *Weekend Edition Sunday* and was recently featured on the public radio program *Interfaith Voices*.

Ms. Witkowski also embodies a love of Brazilian culture. Fluent in Portuguese, she has toured twice in Brazil, 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. As a sidewoman, she plays in drummer Vanderlei Pereira's Brazilian jazz group, "Blindfold Test," and also appears on recent releases with the Schumacher/Sanford Sound Assembly and Joseph C. Phillips' large ensemble, Numinous.

Ms. Witkowski 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).

For more information, visit deannajazz.com.

Tammy L. Kernodle is Associate Professor of Musicology at Miami University (Ohio) where she teaches jazz history, blues, gospel, and other forms of African American music. She is the author of *Soul on Soul: The Life and Music of Mary Lou Williams* (Northeastern University Press, 2004). Dr. Kernodle has lectured on the music of Williams at Jazz at Lincoln Center, the Kennedy Center, and at numerous universities. Kernodle was a consultant for National Public Radio's broadcast of *Mary Lou's Mass* (National Cathedral, 1999) and has worked on Smithsonian Folkways' reissue of recorded works of Williams (most recently writing liner notes with Rev. Peter O'Brien for the 2005 reissue of *Mary Lou's Mass*). From 1999 to 2001, she was Head Scholar for the new Women in Jazz Initiative at the American Jazz Museum in Kansas City. She holds a BM in choral music education and piano from Virginia State University, and an MA and PhD in musicology from Ohio State University.

Kernodle and Witkowski are available for interviews; press kits/CDs are available on request.