

Deanna Witkowski- bio

Witkowski is an astonishingly versatile bandleader.
-Time Out New York

Winner of the Great American Jazz Piano Competition and a past guest on Marian McPartland's *Piano Jazz*, New York-based pianist/composer/arranger Deanna Witkowski has been heralded for her "consistently thrilling" playing and her "boundless imagination" (*All Music Guide*). Her six albums include *Raindrop: Improvisations with Chopin*, a solo piano session that seamlessly combines jazz, classical, and Brazilian music; three jazz quartet recordings; and the liturgical jazz release, *From This Place*, with music ranging from three-part women's *a cappella* to SATB pieces with instrumental jazz trio. Her brand new trio recording, *Makes the Heart to Sing: Jazz Hymns*, features twelve of her congregational jazz hymn arrangements along with a corresponding sheet music songbook.

Witkowski's body of work includes eighty sacred music originals and arrangements, including two jazz Masses, choral works, and congregational songs. Her new SATB song, "We Walk in Love," was recently selected for the inaugural Justice Choir songbook, curated by Abbie Betinis and Tesfa Wondemagegnehu. Accolades in 2017 include winning the Annual Hymn Search of The Hymn Society in the US and Canada (for her congregational song, "We Belong to God"); the ChoralArt New England Carol Contest (for her *a cappella* choral setting of the G.K. Chesterton poem, "A Christmas Carol"), and the Colorado Chorale commission contest for women composers. In 2016, she won the Illinois-ACDA Choral Composition Contest and the Lutheran Arts-sponsored Martin Luther Hymn Prize. In 2015, Witkowski was selected for the New Dramatists Composer-Librettist Studio, where she worked with five playwrights to compose five music theater pieces in two weeks' time.

A frequent presenter on jazz and spirituality, Witkowski was the opening lecturer at the 2011 William H. Shannon Chair in Catholic Studies lecture series at Nazareth College. In 2013, her performance/talk, *Jazz and Proverb: A Musical Portrait of Wisdom in the Work of Four Female Artists* was featured at the biannual International Thomas Merton Society meeting.

As a 2017 recipient of the Sacatar Institute Fellowship, Witkowski will spend two months in the spring of 2018 in Bahia, Brazil doing research related to her New York Foundation for the Arts fiscally sponsored project, the *Nossa Senhora Suite*. NSS will merge Afro-Brazilian ritual music and jazz in a new work for Witkowski's jazz quartet plus four vocalists, exploring different versions of the Virgin Mary in Brazil, such as Nossa Senhora Aparecida (patron saint of Brazil) and Iemanjá (goddess of the seas).

Fluent in Portuguese, Witkowski has toured three times in Brazil, appearing at the Recife Jazz Festival and Modern Sound in Rio de Janeiro. She has led her own groups at the Recife Jazz Festival and the Tel Aviv Opera House. In 2004, she toured internationally as the pianist for vocalist Lizz Wright; from 2006-2016, she was the pianist in the BMI/New York Jazz Orchestra.

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).

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