

Sara Caswell | VIOLINIST

Sara Caswell “is a brilliant world-class violinist...one of the very best of the present generation of emerging young jazz stars” according to David Baker, internationally-renowned jazz educator and Director of the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra. Rooted in an early exposure to a variety of musical genres, Sara’s technical facility on the violin intertwined with her gift for lyricism continues to attract growing attention to her artistry as a jazz soloist, sideman, and teacher.

Recognized as a “Rising Star” in the 2013 *DownBeat Magazine* Critics and Readers Polls and as one of the top jazz violinists in both the 2011 and 2012 *JazzTimes* Readers’ Polls, Sara’s three groups (the Sara Caswell Quartet, the Joe Brent & Sara Caswell Duo, and the Caswell Sisters Quintet with her sister, vocalist Rachel) have been heard in venues ranging from Jazz at Lincoln Center’s Dizzy’s Club to college & university concert halls nationwide. In 2013, Sara and Rachel released a new CD, *Alive in the Singing Air* featuring acclaimed jazz pianist Fred Hersch, which has garnered numerous rave reviews and was selected by jazz critic Thomas Cunniffe as one of the “Best Vocal CDs” for 2013 on *Jazz History Online*. Sara’s two solo CDs, *First Song* (Double-Time Records, 2000) and *But Beautiful* (Arbors Records, 2005), have had international airplay and received such accolades as *But Beautiful*’s inclusion among the top jazz albums for 2005 in both *Coda Magazine* and *Jazz Education Journal*, and a #1 ranking on nationally-syndicated jazz radio host Bob Parlocha’s list of “Top 40 New Releases.”

In addition, Sara regularly performs with Grammy-nominated jazz vocalist Roseanna Vitro, the genre-defying quartet Rose & the Nightingale, David Krakauer’s The Big Picture, the Nadjé Noordhuis Quintet, Alan Ferber’s Nonet with Strings, and guitarist Gene Bertoncini. A member of the New York Pops, Sara has been a featured soloist with them several times in Carnegie Hall as well as on national TV for NBC’s 2009 Macy’s 4th of July Fireworks Spectacular. During 2010-11, Sara toured 5 continents with 3-time Grammy winner bassist/vocalist Esperanza Spalding in support of Spalding’s CD *Chamber Music Society* (Heads Up International, 2010). Sara has also toured with Grammy-winning violinist Mark O’Connor’s American String Celebration and violinist Darol Anger’s Four Generations of Jazz Violin. Other artists with whom she has performed and/or recorded include Regina Carter, Lynne Arriale, Fabian Almazan, Ike Sturm, John Clayton, Charlie Byrd, Skitch Henderson, and Bucky Pizzarelli.

Sara’s formidable teaching experience includes the Manhattan School of Music College and Precollege Divisions, the Mark O’Connor String Camps, the Jamey Aebersold Summer Jazz Workshops, the Indiana University String Academy, and a private studio. In addition, she has given numerous jazz string improvisation workshops and master classes and is involved with JEN (Jazz Education Network), MENC (National Association of Music Education), and ASTA (American String Teachers Association).

As an award-winning classical violinist, Sara has soloed with several orchestras, given numerous recitals, and performed as a chamber musician in a variety of settings. She was raised in a musical family and began violin at age 5, moving through the first five Suzuki volumes in just nine months. Subsequent years of private lessons at Indiana University led to her involvement in the classical competition circuit where she won numerous awards and 1st-place prizes, culminating in her participation in the 2002 International Violin Competition of Indianapolis.

Violinist Franco Gulli has written: *“Extremely gifted virtuoso of her instrument, and fine musician as well, Sara Caswell has always shown a remarkable understanding of different musical styles and an uncommon power of communication. These qualities are making of this young artist an outstanding one.”*

A graduate of Indiana University, which she attended under full scholarship as a Wells Scholar, Sara received B.M. Degrees with High Distinction and an Artist Diploma in both Violin Performance and Jazz Studies. In 2006 Sara completed her M.M. Degree in Jazz Violin at the Manhattan School of Music. Amongst her numerous stellar teachers, Sara studied several years with the legendary Josef Gingold (classical), Stanley Ritchie (baroque), and David Baker (jazz). She has also worked with many of today’s top jazz artists at the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz Summer Residency Program and at the Steans Institute for Young Artists at the Ravinia Jazz Festival. Sara’s 100+ music honors include several *DownBeat* Awards, top awards at 16 jazz festivals during her high school years, and a front-line position in the inaugural Sisters in Jazz Collegiate Competition Quintet.

Sara’s artistry and unique sound lead international recording artist/violinist Mark O’Connor to write: *“Most good violinists will never experience what Sara creates with her instrument. It is beautifully refined emotion that lifts the spirit...Jazz violin needs a universal ambassador...a player who can pick up where the last generation left off. Sara Caswell is well on her way to extending that tradition to touch new audiences.”*