

## Chiara Izzi, Jazz Singer With A Mediterranean Voice

Chiara Basso (March 01, 2019)



This Italian artist is not afraid to explore her vocal potential in different languages and across genres. Yesterday at Birdland, she presented her second and newly released album, *Across the Sea* (Jando), co-created with pianist and vocalist Kevin Hays. And now she is also planning a tour.

When she entered on the stage at [Birdland Jazz Club](#) [2], [Chiara Izzi](#) [3] was visibly nervous but soon let her voice and pianist [Kevin Hays](#) [4] guide her. After having broken the ice with the first song, she started feeling at ease and, before any song, she explained to the audience the story and the feelings hidden behind each tune in her album, "**Across the Sea**" (Jando), released on February 22.

Izzi, who also debuted yesterday at Birdland, worked on the album with Hays, an internationally acclaimed pianist and vocalist whom she describes as one of her mentors and whom she was always looking at during the concert.

### An Across The Sea project

With Hays at the piano and Izzi dominating the stage, the duo yesterday played all the 10 multilingual pieces of the album, which comprises original pieces and lyrics by each protagonist and highly personalized interpretations of songs from composers and songwriters who both artists love and admire (**James Taylor, Pat Metheny, Henri Mancini** to name of few).



They were joined on stage by two special guests, **Grégoire Maret** (harmonica) and **Nir Felder** (guitar), along with Rob Jost on bass and **Greg Joseph** on drums.

Yet, Izzi doesn't want to describe this album, her debut at Birdland, and probably a tour, as a dream came true. "I would rather say that this is a dream in progress. It is the realization of a wonderful project that gave me the opportunity of working with stellar musicians like **bassist and French hornist Rob Jost and drummer Greg Joseph**, **in the company of very special guests, Chris Potter on saxophone, Grégoire Maret on harmonica, Omer Avital on oud, Nir Felder on guitar and Rogério Boccato on percussion.**" But of course, she envisions much more to come.

## Leveraging her Italianness

**Enzo Capua**, the album's producer, is also confident in Izzi's talent and thinks that much more can be achieved. "Among Italian female jazz singers, Chiara is the only one to have been able to create an album with such important American collaborations besides **Roberta Gambarini**, one of the finest jazz singers in the world and very well known in the States too."

Capua recalls that he was first introduced to the talent of Chiara Izzi at a festival in Rome, around seven years ago. Although thinking that she had a lot of potential, he had never imagined that he would have collaborated with her years later in New York City. "When I met her in New York, she had grown incredibly from a professional point of view," he says.

To differentiate herself from other jazz singers and turn her Italianness, as well as her warm, Mediterranean voice, in an advantage rather than a limit, Capua believes that it was crucial for Izzi to sing and include Italian songs in her album, like "Viaggio Elegiaco" where Izzi contributed to Hays' music with Italian songwriting. But also when writing in English, she gives a glimpse of her Italian background, like in "Circles Of The Mind."

## An elegiac journey

Talking about "Viaggio Elegiaco," Izzi explained that it is "an example of different musical worlds that meet and build something new. Also, we explored together which language could fit better each song, we sang together on songs switching languages to listen and see how things could work in different ways and make the music sound more effective and meaningful."

"For example, we were working on let's say an American song, and he would tell, 'Ok, why don't we think about telling a story in Italian?' about this song... This kind of exchange and experimenting was interesting. And in fact for several songs from the album we wound up having two different versions of lyrics in two different languages for the same song and sometimes we couldn't decide which one to keep because we liked both."

## How Izzi and Hays met

Recorded in August 2017, "Across The Sea" is the result of the special connection that Izzi and Hays established since their initial encounter. "We share an open-minded approach, with a similar appreciation and love for artists belonging to different genres," Izzi says. "Our collaboration is an example of different musical worlds that meet and build something new."

She had first met Hays in Italy in 2006, while he was playing in Campobasso, her hometown. After the concert, Izzi, then a university student majoring in communications and media who was beginning her career as a professional musician, asked him to sign her copy of his CD, "For Heaven's Sake."

Later the Italian singer became a bandleader based in Rome and made her international debut at the 2011 Montreux International Jazz Festival Vocal Competition, where Quincy Jones awarded her first prize. With the award came the 2012 recording session that generated her debut album, "Motifs" (Dot-Time), an 11-track program that includes lyrics in English, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese.

But Izzi's final goal was New York City. Izzi made the move in August 2014. Not long thereafter, she



was playing with Hays at a midtown Manhattan club. It was the beginning of a fruitful collaboration. "I thought she had something special," Hays says. "There was a sense of sincerity and honesty — a lack of artifice. She has an inner strength that I think is rare. I said, 'We should work on some music.'"

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