

Tina Fabrique Channels Ella Fitzgerald

• By OWEN McNALLY, Special to The Courant The Hartford Courant

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Tina Fabrique, the versatile actress/singer with a thick stage and jazz resume, knows Ella Fitzgerald's repertoire as she has proven many times to Hartford audiences.

Fabrique, who has played the First Lady of Song on stage in theatrical productions at Hartford Stage and Hartford's TheaterWorks and other regional theaters throughout the United States, once again assumes the Ella mantle Friday, Nov. 4 at 8 p.m. as she sings in a tribute to the legendary jazz vocalist in the Hartford Symphony Orchestra's "Jazz and Strings Series." The 2011-2012 season opener for the HSO'S popular series is presented at the Theater for the Performing Arts at the Learning Corridor, 359 Washington St, Hartford.

As a thoroughly seasoned surrogate for Ella, Fabrique joins forces with a contingent from the HSO and four jazz musicians to pay homage to the classic album, "Ella Fitzgerald Sings the Cole Porter Songbook."

Along with members of the HSO string, brass and wind sections, she will be accompanied by four stalwart, Connecticut-based jazz musicians: Edward "Rick" Rozie, the HSO principal double bassist; pianist/arranger Walter Gwardyak, a frequent arranger for HSO; Gene Bozzi, the HSO principal timpanist, and alto saxophonist John Mastroianni. Longtime members of the HSO and frequent flyers between the worlds of classical and jazz, Rozie and Bozzi are, in addition to their classical credits, also highly respected for their jazz accomplishments and musical versatility.

Fabrique will perform selections from the 1956 Verve album, one of the most acclaimed releases in the famous series of LPs Fitzgerald devoted to great popular music composers, as well as other Fitzgerald hits. Among the variety of Fitzgerald favorites to expect are "Begin the Beguine," "I Love Paris," "It Don't Mean a Thing (If It Ain't Got that Swing)" and "Night and Day." A highlight includes Fabrique scatting a la Ella on Antonio Carlos Jobim's "One Note Samba."

Although perhaps best known for starring as Fitzgerald in the award-winning stage production of "Ella," directed by Rob Ruggiero, Fabrique also has extensive Broadway and Off-Broadway credits and jazz experience, including a stint with the Duke Ellington Orchestra under the direction of Duke's son, Mercer Ellington.

To much acclaim for her individual performance, she first presented the Ella role in 2005 at Hartford's TheaterWorks when the stage production was called "Ella: Off the Record."

Later rewritten and renamed "Ella," the revised portrait of Fitzgerald's life and artistry traveled around the country, including a run at New Haven's Long Wharf Theater in 2010. It even returned to Hartford in 2008 with a SummerStage engagement at Hartford Stage.

As a jazz singer, Fabrique has performed with Joe Williams and Ron Carter, and at such famous venues as the Village Gate and the Village Vanguard. Her numerous theater credits include Broadway productions of "Ragtime," and "Bring In Da Noise/Bring In Da Funk."

Conceived and directed by Bozzi, the "Jazz and Strings Series" has, since 2009, presented tributes to jazz legends ranging from Charlie Parker to John Coltrane, featuring lead performances by such notables as Sue Terry, Claudio Roditi, Wayne Escoffery, Giacomo Gates, Kris Allen, Joel Frahm and Shawnn Monteiro.

On the jazz side of his diversified career, Bozzi has played with Dave Liebman, Steve Swallow and Gerry Mulligan. An expert practitioner of Latin jazz, he has performed Brazilian music with the Claudio Roditi Quartet. In 2007, he toured Russia with the Hendrik Meurkens Quartet. A noted educator, he teaches percussion at Wesleyan University and Trinity College and is the music department chair at the Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts.

Members of the HSO contingent aboard for "Jazz with Strings" are: Leonid Sigal, Karin Fagerburg, Millie Piekos, Deborah Tyler, Lisa Rautenberg, Michael Pollard, Jaroslaw Lis, Martha Kayser, Lu Sun and Candace M. Lammers, violin; Michael Wheeler and Sharon Dennison, viola; Jeffrey Krieger and Eric Dahlin, cello; Scott McIntosh, trumpet; Brian Diehl, trombone; and Michael Leventhal, saxophone.

The series' two other concerts this season feature alto saxophonist Erica von Kleist in an homage to the 1955 album, "Julian 'Cannonball' Adderley with Strings" on March 2, 2012, and tenor saxophonist Jimmy Greene performing original works with HSO string players and Bozzi's jazz troupers May 19, 2012. All concerts are at the Theater for the Performing Arts at the Learning Corridor.

Tickets: Subscription to the 2011-2012 "Jazz and Strings Series" are \$54 for orchestra seating, \$104 for center orchestra seating. Single tickets are \$20 for orchestra seating, \$40 for center orchestra seating. Student tickets are \$10. For tickets and information: HSO ticket services at 860-244-2999 and <http://www.hartfordsymphony.org>.