

**Simona Premazzi Presents *Outspoken*, Featuring the Pianist-Composer  
Alongside Saxophonist Dayna Stephens, Bassist Joe Martin & Drummer  
Nasheet Waits, plus Guest Trumpeter Jeremy Pelt and Vocalist Sara  
Serpa**

*Outspoken* – to be released by PRE on August 25, 2017 – includes Premazzi’s solo abstraction of Billy Strayhorn’s “Lush Life,” the ethereal vocal number “It Is Here” (with words by Harold Pinter) and a brace of boldly poetic originals for her all-star band

**Premazzi will showcase music from *Outspoken* in two New York quartet performances featuring Dayna Stephens: June 21 at the Italian Cultural Institute and July 12 at Smalls**

*“Premazzi excels as both pianist and composer. Her solos dart... to follow an unexpected path. But her melodic spins never detract; they surprise. She’s inventive, but always swinging.”* — DownBeat

Bred in Italy but long based in Harlem, pianist-composer **Simona Premazzi** has been praised by *DownBeat* magazine as “a wickedly clever soloist with a very original viewpoint.” *The New York Times* extolled her qualities this way: “*Her composing style stays modern without ever being airless and swing-deficient, open without getting lost in harmony and sentimentality. And her soloing is special.*” After earning such admiration as both a bandleader and a key player in outfits led by the likes of saxophonist Greg Osby and trumpeter Jeremy Pelt, Premazzi presents her fourth album as a leader: ***Outspoken***. To be released via her PRE imprint on **August 25, 2017**, the recording – co-produced by **Jeremy Pelt** – features a virtuoso quartet with saxophonist **Dayna Stephens**, bassist **Joe Martin** and drummer **Nasheet Waits**. There are also guest performances by Pelt and vocalist **Sara Serpa**. The album showcases Premazzi’s vivid instrumental originals, including a tribute to Andrew Hill, a prime influence. Also, for Serpa, she composed an ethereal vocal number, “It Is Here,” which sets words by the Nobel Prize-winning playwright Harold Pinter. Then there is her compelling solo abstraction of Billy Strayhorn’s timeless song “Lush Life.” Premazzi will unveil music from *Outspoken* in two New York performances this summer, leading quartets featuring Stephens at the Italian Cultural Institute (**June 21**) and the club Smalls (**July 12**).

The title of *Outspoken* subtly references Premazzi’s intention to **speak up and speak out**. “It’s vital to express one’s self creatively – your true self and all of yourself,” she says. “Sometimes, people can be quiet and keep things inside when they shouldn’t. For a woman, it’s important to strive **to be heard** in a culture where our voices still aren’t necessarily expected to resonate on a plane equal with those of men. Jazz is like any other male-dominated environment in that you can encounter some chauvinism. Things are much better than they used to be, but **there’s still more to do**, progress to achieve. In these times, this really is important for everyone.”

Premazzi recorded *Outspoken* at Manhattan’s famed Sear Sound, with Jeremy Pelt in the control room alongside top engineer James Farber. “I met Jeremy about a decade ago, eventually playing in his band, recording with him,” Premazzi says. “He was a **great sounding board** on arrangements, which takes were best, etcetera. I have a clear idea in my mind of where I want to go, but I trust Jeremy’s opinions to focus thing. He has such an encyclopedic, musically cultured mind – and he hears everything.” Pelt – who also recorded Premazzi’s *Outspoken* ballad “**Digression**” on his own album from earlier this year, *Make Noise!* – adds the lyrical fire of his trumpet to the new track “Peltlude,” which the pianist named for him. About Premazzi, **Pelt says: “I almost think of Simona more as a painter than a musician. Her playing, like her compositions, can really tell a story.** And she put together a team of sympathetic musicians who interpreted her music as if they were there when she wrote

it.”

Of the *Outspoken* band, Premazzi has known Dayna Stephens the longest, having met him in Italy prior to her moving to New York in 2004. The saxophonist contributed his vamping, drum-centric tune “**Blakonian Groove**” to the album. “Dayna has played my music for so long now and, really, more and more,” the pianist says. “He’s **an ideal saxophonist for me** – for his sound and the way he seems to read my mind.” As for the rhythm section, the pianist adds: “I love Joe Martin’s dark, solid sound, and **his bass moves around the harmonies in such a lyrical way**. Nasheet Waits is such an incredible colorist on the drums, free yet earthy – no one plays like him. On the song ‘**Premaxity**,’ he plays this long outro solo at a low volume, but with **such intensity and variety of texture**. Also, let’s not forget Sara Serpa, who is a friend as well as one of my favorite singers, with such a **pure, beautiful** voice. When I was inspired to make ‘**It Is Here**’ a vocal piece after discovering Harold Pinter’s words, hers was the voice in my head as I set the lyrics. They’re romantic words but also about sound.”

Premazzi has been inspired by the example of the great pianist-composer Andrew Hill. Framing *Outspoken* are two versions of her atmospheric ballad “**Euterpe’s Dance**,” one for piano, bass and drums, the other for piano and bass. Hill had his own tune called “Euterpe,” named for one of the Muses of Greek myth. But Hill’s influence shows up most directly on the album with **Premazzi’s arresting, melody-rich homage “Up on A. Hill.”** Of the Blue Note icon’s music, she says: “Andrew Hill’s compositions are so unusual and striking – their angularity, all the layers, the geometrical shapes. And he was such a dramatic player and the opposite of square, the way he floated between bars. He had his own way of making music, a true individual. I wish I had met him.”

There are other tributes on *Outspoken*, with Premazzi writing the free-spirited, off-kilter “**Later Ago**” the day Ornette Coleman passed away. There is also her interpretation of “**Lush Life**,” which is “such a wonderfully ageless song,” she says. “I wanted to **stretch the music** on solo piano, to take liberties while still making the song recognizable. It’s one of the most emblematic songs in jazz history – and written by a young black, gay man, a real outsider in the America of that time. In a way, I can feel like an outsider myself, as **natural introvert in an extroverted profession**, as a striver in a hard business, as a European in America, as a woman in what’s still often a man’s world. But Ornette, Andrew Hill, Billy Strayhorn – these are universal artists who can inspire anyone who really cares about music. My ultimate wish is that listeners who find their way to my album might be **stimulated and inspired** like I am when I listen to music that I love. Nothing would make me happier.”

## **Simona Premazzi**

In addition to being a pianist and composer, Premazzi is a visual artist, whose painting graces the cover of *Outspoken*. Prior to this, she released *The Lucid Dreamer* via Greg Osby’s Inner Circle Music in 2013; that album features tenor saxophonist Melissa Aldana, bassist Ameen Saleem and drummer Jochen Rueckert, with Osby guesting on alto/soprano saxophones. Premazzi’s second album, *Inside In* (PRE, 2010), showcased her band The Intruders with saxophonist Stacy Dillard, bassist Ryan Berg, drummer Rudy Royston and rapper Baba Israel. Premazzi’s debut, *Looking for an Exit* (PRE, 2007), was a trio record with bassist Joe Sanders and drummer Ari Hoenig. Raised in a small town on the outskirts of Milan, Premazzi graduated from the conservatory in Udine, studying further at the International Academy of Music and CPM music school in Milan. She was a member of the Mingus Fingers Septet and Enrico Intra’s Big Band, touring alongside the likes of Enrico Rava and Paolo Fresu. Since moving to New York, Premazzi has performed with a who’s who on the scene, including memberships in the Greg Osby 4 and the Jeremy Pelt 5et.

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