

# JANICE BORLA

"Among the best, boldest and most innovative vocalists around...  
A one-woman jazz tornado...Genius. Pure genius." ~ Christopher Loudon, *Jazz Times*

"A stunning singer with a lustrous voice and the technique, imagination and daring of  
the best improvising instrumentalists." ~ *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*

Janice Borla has made it her artistic mission to use her voice as a true jazz instrument – and that resolve is evident in all aspects of her music. Her recordings and performances have earned her consistently high praise for her beautiful sound, superb technique, adventurous repertoire and imaginative vocal improvisations. Often cited for her adventurous, risk-taking approach, Janice continually challenges herself, keeping vocal improvisation front-and-center in her performances. "I'm really a 'vocal instrumentalist' – a musician whose instrument is my voice," she says. Her repertoire is an eclectic mix, favoring instrumental jazz tunes by modern and contemporary jazz composers.

With each successive recording Janice continues to drill deeper into the musical approach that has distinguished her from so many of her contemporaries – and to reap wide critical praise. Both ***Promises to Burn*** (2014) and her prior CD ***From Every Angle*** (2007) received "4 stars" in *DownBeat Magazine* and were among its "Best Albums of the Year." ***Agents of Change*** (2003) was named "The #1 Jazz CD of the Year" by WBEZ-FM Chicago Public Radio and praised by *Jazz Times* as "Genius. Pure genius." ***Three Story Sandbox*** (2016), featuring her in free improvisations with Jack and multi-instrumentalist Scott Robinson, was a February, 2016 "Editor's Pick" by *DownBeat Magazine*.

The native Chicagoan began her music training on keyboard at age 8 and her vocal training at 12. She earned a Bachelor's degree in Music from Barat College (Lake Forest, IL), with vocal training at Northwestern University. While attending the University of Illinois (Champaign-Urbana) for graduate study, she sang with the Ineluctable Modality, a 12-voice touring chamber ensemble that performed experimental new music by such contemporary composers as Mauricio Kagel and Iannis Xenakis.

Since then she has performed with such jazz talents as Clark Terry, Bunky Green, Bobby Watson, Gary Bartz, Terry Gibbs, Bobby Shew, Scott Robinson, Holly Hoffman, Mike Wofford, Pete Malenverni, Steve Rodby, Claire Daly, Sheila Jordan, Jay Clayton, Judy Niemack, Karrin Allyson, Peter Eldridge, Roseanna Vitro, Kitty Margolis, Madeline Eastman, Kim Nazarian, Fareed Haque, John McLean, Dan Haerle and numerous others. Past performances include Chicago's Jazz Showcase, The Iridium (NYC), the Chicago Jazz Festival, Women in Jazz Festival (Fort Bragg, CA) and the IAJE Conference (NYC).

Janice has been mentoring aspiring vocalists for nearly as long as she has been performing. A recognized pioneer in vocal jazz education, in 1986 she founded the vocal jazz camp at the Saskatchewan Summer School of the Arts, and in 1989 brought it to the U.S. as the ***Janice Borla Vocal Jazz Camp*** and ***Hot Jazz – 6 Cool Nites*** Concert Series. The annual event, cited as "one of the most innovative and dynamic summer jazz educational programs in the country" (*Jazziz*) ran for 26 years. Since 1996 Janice is Director of Vocal Jazz with the Jazz Studies Program at North Central College (Naperville IL). She previously served on the jazz faculties at Benedictine University, Northeastern Illinois University and College of DuPage. As a guest artist and clinician she has performed at high schools, colleges and festivals in the U.S. Canada, Europe and Japan. She has published articles on vocal jazz in *Downbeat* and the *Jazz Educators Journal*, and since 2007 has served as judge for the *DownBeat* Student Music Awards.

In 2016 Jack and Janice launched Flashpoint Creative Arts, a non-profit organization whose mission is to promote the understanding and practice of improvisation as an essential life skill. In 2019 they were made Paul Harris Fellows by the Rotary Foundation of Rotary International in recognition of their work with young people with autism spectrum disorder.