

# Sara Caswell | VIOLINIST

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Sara Caswell “is a brilliant world-class violinist...one of the very best of the present generation of emerging young jazz stars” according to the late David Baker, internationally-renowned jazz educator and former 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 *DownBeat Magazine* Critics and Readers Polls every year since 2013 and featured on the cover of the September 2014 issue of *Strings Magazine*, Sara’s two groups (the Sara Caswell Quartet and the Caswell Sisters Quintet) have been heard in venues ranging from Jazz at Lincoln Center’s Dizzy’s Club to university concert halls nationwide. In 2013 Sara and her sister, vocalist Rachel Caswell, released their CD, *Alive in the Singing Air* featuring jazz pianist Fred Hersch, to rave reviews and its selection by jazz critic Thomas Cunniffe as one of the year’s “Best Vocal CDs” on *Jazz History Online*. Sara’s two CDs, *First Song* (Double-Time Records, 2000) and *But Beautiful* (Arbors Records, 2005), were recognized in several year-end best-of jazz album releases and continue to receive international airplay.

Sara regularly performs with clarinetist David Krakauer’s The Big Picture, mandolinist Joseph Brent’s 9 Horses, bassist Brian Coughlin’s Fireworks Ensemble, jazz vocalist Roseanna Vitro, and trumpeter Nadje Noordhuis. She is a member of the house band for NBC’s weekly variety show “Maya & Marty” starring Maya Rudolph and Martin Short, as well as the New York Pops Orchestra with whom she has been a featured soloist several times in Carnegie Hall and on national TV for NBC’s 2009 Macy’s 4<sup>th</sup> of July Fireworks Spectacular. In addition to touring for two years with 3-time Grammy-winning bassist/vocalist Esperanza Spalding in support of Spalding’s 2010 CD *Chamber Music Society*, Sara has toured with singer/songwriter/violinist Kishi Bashi, violinist Mark O’Connor’s American String Celebration, and violinist Darol Anger’s Four Generations of Jazz Violin. She has performed and/or recorded with such artists as Regina Carter, Jenny Scheinman, Lynne Arriale, Fabian Almazan, Alan Ferber, Oscar Penas, Ike Sturm, John Clayton, Charlie Byrd, Gene Bertoncini, Skitch Henderson, and Bucky Pizzarelli.

Currently on faculty at both the Berklee College of Music and the Manhattan School of Music, Sara’s formidable teaching experience also includes the Mark O’Connor String Camps, the Jamey Aebersold Summer Jazz Workshops, the Indiana University String Academy, and a private studio. 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 1<sup>st</sup>-place prizes. 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."*