

NIKKI ILES

THE GUARDIAN (JOHN FORDHAM)

"A formidable UK jazz presence ..."

"Iles is one of the most refreshing figures to have emerged in the UK scene in recent times, with a liquid sound and supple, obliquely resolved phrasing as an improviser".

"Formidably creative...."

"The Heroine of British Jazz ..."

THE OBSERVER (DAVE GELLY)

'Nikki Iles is a pianist of extraordinary imagination who thrives on fugitive melodies...'

As a founder member of the hugely innovative Creative Jazz Orchestra in the early 90s, Nikki Iles came to prominence working with musicians such as Anthony Braxton, Vince Mendoza, Mark Anthony Turnage, Kenny Wheeler and Mike Gibbs. Mike subsequently booked her for one of her first recording dates with great American musicians, Steve Swallow and Bob Moses on the CD "By The Way" on AH HUM records.

For many years, Nikki served a lengthy apprenticeship in the North of England playing with the cream of British and American jazz such as Peter King, Iain Ballamy, Art Farmer, Peter King, Tina May, Tim Garland and Jim Mullen. Many of these relationships were re-kindled later, when after a car accident, Nikki finally decided to make the move to London in 1998. Here she joined the groups and toured and recorded with musicians such as Steve Arguelles, Mick Hutton, Martin Speake, Stan Sulzmann and Julian Arguelles and Norma Winstone. Several awards followed with the BT British Jazz Award and an IAJE Award in America for services to Jazz.

Although well known as a pianist, composition still remains a major part of her musical life. The breadth of Nikki's artistic vision has led her to disregard the arbitrary boundaries of the jazz scene and most notably, commissions have included a collaboration with American dancer Mimi Cichanowicz, the UMO Jazz Orchestra in Finland, "A Gentle Prayer" - London Sinfonietta, "Red Ellen" - Tim Garland's Northern Underground Band, "Carillion" - The LPO's Renga ensemble and this year "The Caged Bird" from the International Society of Jazz Arrangers and

Composers. Nikki was honoured to have her piece HUSH commissioned by the National Youth Jazz Orchestra featured at the 2012 Proms (BBC TV) and more recently write for the great American singer, Kurt Elling and The Scottish National Jazz Orchestra .

Recently she has been particularly busy - she was awarded the prestigious Ivors Academy Gold Badge and the Ivor Novello Award - winning the best large ensemble composition in 2021. Thorough lockdown, she won The Seattle jazz composition prize and was a recipient of both The British Jazz and Parliamentary Jazz Awards and in the Queens New Years Honours list 2022, a British Empire Medal for services to music . An inspirational teacher, she was also awarded an Honorary RAM from The Royal Academy of Music and a Fellow of Birmingham Conservatoire for outstanding contributions to the music. As a player she remains much in demand with over 35 recordings to her name. Recent work has taken her across the world as a member of the Julian Arguelles Octet, The Kenny Wheeler Big Band, Claire Martin and "The North ", a Scandinavian/Anglo/Canadian collaboration featuring Percy Pursglove and Anders Morgensen . Her most recent recordings are - "Hush " with Americans, Rufus Reid and Jeff Williams. "Mirrors " with Kenny Wheeler and Norma Winstone, Lush Life with Stan Sulzmann and Dave Holland and with her own group, The Printmakers "Westerly". The last few 3 years also marks a new chapter in her long and distinguished career with writing for larger forces .This new music will be taking her across the world directing bands in Hungary, Germany ,Prague, Ireland and Colorado, which has culminated in a post as artist in residence with the great NDR radio big band in Hamburg for 2023.

With a parallel career as a widely respected teacher in composition and arranging, Nikki is a Professor at the Royal Academy of Music. She also gives masterclasses around the world and has been a driving force behind the innovative Jazz syllabus at the ABRSM and continues to publish extensively with Oxford University Press and EVC Music.

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