

Mp3 Barbara Sfraga And Center Search Quest - Timelessness Frozen In Time



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Jazz/World Fusion/Nu-Jazz/catchy hooks/vocals...it travels...this puppy will make you happy. 10 MP3 Songs WORLD: World Fusion, JAZZ: Jazz Vocals Details: Press Reviews: Jazziz Magazine Barbara Sfraga has been working with Center Search Quest in some form for the past four years. Here with an expanded lineup -- 'bass artisan' Christopher Dean Sullivan and 'soundrhythium' Michael "T.A." Thompson were joined two years ago by pianist Mala Waldron and saxophonist Allen Won -- she offers her first recording with the band. This is also the first CD in which Sfraga focuses on original material. It's a bit of a stylistic turn as well. In two previous outings -- her debut, "Oh, What a Thrill" and 2003's "Under the Moon" -- Sfraga offered clever new standards, giving a jazz spin on pop tunes and a contemporary makeover to old standards. In the process, she's gathered a sheaf of glowing reviews and comparisons to fellow 'voicists' (as Sfraga refers to herself) Cassandra Wilson and Patricia Barber. This time out, the only non-original is the Stevie Wonder-penned Rufus hit, "Tell Me Something Good." And that will tell you a lot about this CD, with its strong strain of soul and lyrical focus on love, light and higher planes. Though a couple of songs ("Cool Water," "Be There") are cut from straightahead cloth, most tracks seem more Steely Dan than Strayhorn, more RTF than MJQ. That said, these jazzicists are a cohesive group, both in terms of their own interplay and the ease in which they incorporate soul, funk, rap and adventurous modern jazz into the mix. Sfraga's clear voice is always appealing, and the whole set has a soaring energy that is in keeping with its positive message music slant. Jazz Times Magazine Ms. Sfraga claims her quintet, Center Search Quest plays music without borders. Consider her background; church organist to rock-and-roll belter to jazz singer-writer-arranger. She has never met a genre she didn't like or couldn't assimilate. In the past, Sfraga has done Sophisticated Lady as an up-tempo jazz waltz and added reggae

to Stardust. In Sfraga's new album, she calls herself a 'voicist;' Michael Thompson is a 'soundrhythium.'

Bottom line: few fusion groups can compete with such jazz-oriented diversity. The trio of singers, singers, scat-savvy Sfraga, Mala Waldron(Mal's daughter) who doubles on keyboards, and Thompson doubling on percussion, bark out phrases with the bite of a brass section, and Barbara's soprano cuts through massed sonorities like a laser. On "Be There", tenorist Allen Won adds his horn to the vocal blend, creating four-note chords while the feeling of 3-against-4 pervades the track. On the title tune, Sfraga and her fearless voicists swing in 5/4 as Won's soprano sax weaves soothing obligati. Sfraga's high, thin voice has no difficulty coping with her own wordiness on Cool Water; the lyrics are crystal clear. Kudos to Christopher Sullivan for choosing acoustic bass to get that distinctive growl. Highlight: the give and take of Hang On, Fly Home, Sfraga trading fours and eights with Won's tenor, culminating in astonishing, contrapuntal "free scat." Midwest Record Recap BARBARA SFRAGA/Timelessness Frozen in Time: Theres no doubt Sfraga's a jazzbo, but she leaves no doubt that shes about pushing the envelope, so much so that she bills herself as a voicist rather than a vocalist. Cutting edge from start to finish, even when tackling some well known funk, this set of mostly group written originals succeeds in pushing the envelope in the tradition of the best progressive jazz in contemporary times no matter what freak flag it flies under. Anyone whos dug progressive jazz in the past has something new to look forward to. Jazz Improv Magazine, NY Jazz Guide Barbara Sfraga is one singer who thinks out of the box. Unfortunately, her discography is sparse. "Timelessness Frozen in Time" is Sfraga's third CD ineight years, even though she has been performing in New York since the 1980's. As a result, Sfraga has developed somewhat of a cult following. The buzz about her talent is growing, particularly after the release of her last album, "Under the Moon," on which she reinterpreted some classic standards in unconventional ways. The reviews for "Under the Moon" were uniformly positive. In fact, more than several critics raved. With good reason. The fact that Sfraga refuses to be typecast is consistent with the originality of her recorded output. Sfraga freely chooses the songs she wishes to record, as she draws on her vast interest in all types of music, from jazz to rock to classical to spoken word to folk to R&B to Broadway musicals to raga to reggae. Such freedom works in her favor. For Sfraga is one of those fearless singers who can take any song, no matter how time worn, reconsider its possibilities, apply her own imprint and leave the listener with a previously unthought-of way of regarding the same song. True to form, Sfraga absolutely refuses to fit into categories on "Timelessness Frozen in Time." If, from the evidence of "Under the Moon," people think

Sfraga is, and forever will remain to be, an inventive interpreter of standards, think again. Her newest album consists entirely of original compositions, and they make no attempt to maintain reassuring connections with familiar songs like "Stardust" or "Mood Indigo." Rather, much of the music of "Timelessness Frozen in Time" originated not with Sfraga, but with a group called Center Search Quest, which bassist Christopher Dean Sullivan and drummer Michael "T.A." Thompson started in 1990 as a means for boundless expression. Sfraga found Sullivan and Thompson to be kindred spirits when she met them in 2002, and they have been performing -- with just voice, bass and drums -- ever since as opportunities arose. After keyboardist Mala Waldron and saxophonist Allen Won joined Center Search Quest in 2004, Waldron, Sullivan and Thompson developed some music specifically with Sfraga in mind and presented it to her. Sfraga chose the music that inspired her lyrics. Then after Sfraga wrote some of her own songs, "Timelessness Frozen in Time," recorded in five sessions from August 2004 to March 2005, became a reality in search of distribution. Now that it has been released, "Timelessness Frozen in Time" won't disappoint the listeners who have been impressed with Sfraga's bold interpretations, attention to lyrical meaning and rhythmic playfulness. But "Timelessness Frozen in Time" is no "Under the Moon." Sfraga has embarked upon an entirely new venture, disclosing another side of her personality, another facet of her talent, that wasn't apparent on previous albums. Many of the same characteristics do remain. Her ability to tell a story with swinging humorous rapidity, inspired she says by Lambert Hendricks Ross, is present on "Cool Water." Sfraga's total immersion in the exigencies of a song, never breaking away from it until an entire image has been created, is evident on "Love Breaks Free," the foreboding nature of the initial chorus leading inexorably from the modal tension to dynamically soaring release. While many writers have compared Sfraga to Sheila Jordan or Patricia Barber, probably because they read such comparisons in the press releases of Sfraga's publicists, Sfraga's influences appear to be much more varied than that. She's too unpredictable to be compared to Jordan, and she's not cool enough to be a direct comparison to Barber, who rarely raises her voice to a shout. Truth be told, the closest comparison to Sfraga's work on "Timelessness Frozen in Time," in my opinion, would be to some of the recent recordings of Janis Siegel, another singer who understands the importance of lyrics. Dancing in the Rain, in particular, recalls some of Siegel's work on her recent CD A Thousand Beautiful Things (which also uses spoken word, Marion Saunders', as does Timeless Frozen in Time). Even a little bit of Sade is apparent in the final harmony of "Be There." In the end, Sfraga and Center Search Quest have developed

a sound of their own that incorporates a multitude of influences, including the reggae on "I'm in the Light" and quarter-tone Jaipurlike wavering on "Love Breaks Free." Presenting a repertoire that's as varied as the experiences of the members of Center Search Quest, "Timelessness Frozen in Time" features yet another aspect of Sfraga's talent that hadn't been entirely apparent from her few previous recordings. The song "Timelessness Frozen in Time" does, however, lope along in 5/4 times, as did "I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face" on "Under the Moon." Plus, Sfraga's notes occur off the beat as often as not, a stylistic characteristic found on previous recordings too. "Timelessness Frozen in Time" includes something for everybody, so diverse is its music. The track I keep replaying is "Be There," a waltz built upon a single note and played with tongue-twisting speed, which Sfraga tackles with lan and precise articulation. And so, what's the meaning of the album's title? It lies in lyrics that Sfraga wrote: "Here's to a brand new day / Back to the light of day. / Time has entered Timelessness Frozen in Time." And so, with a paradox that piques the listener's interest, Barbara Sfraga has not only poetically described an entrancing time of day with an arresting phrase, but also she has reinforced the intent of the music. She challenges audiences to listen, but more importantly to think as well.

Listen Here! Radio, Neil Tesser (Radio Review) Neil Tesser: I have a new recording from Barbara Sfraga. That's a difficult name to pronounce, although Mark, you've pronounced it often because you produced her previous album. Mark Ruffin: That's right. N.T.: The name is spelled S-F-R-A-G-A, Barbara Sfraga, and this new album features a band she's calling Center Search Quest. And this is both an extension of her previous album, the one you, Mark Ruffin, produced, but also a departure from it, I think. She was moving into some heady territory on the previous album and I thought - I love that album - using just guitar, bass and drums as her backup. She's expanded a little on that here to include the piano work - piano and keyboards - of Mala Waldron, the keyboard-playing daughter of the late Mal Waldron. She also includes a saxophonist and some other vocalizations on this recording. But the real spirit of this, I think, lies in Barbara Sfraga's intention of embracing pop music with a jazz sensibility. This is pop music at its best I think - at its best on the album, but also as good as I'd want to hear pop music ever done. And I think the reason for that is because the musicians are not trying to do something they don't believe in, but they also have the ability to bring more to the table than most pop musicians do. Listen to a little bit of this tune. It's the opening track called "Hang On, Fly Home." (plays sound clip of "Hang On, Fly Home") N.T.: That's vocalist Barbara Sfraga and her new band entitled Center Search Quest, and a new album entitled "Timelessness

Frozen in Time." And just for good measure it's on a new label entitled SyncTimiCity. But in any case, Barbara Sfraga is taking on the guise, the trappings, of a pop music approach, but with the sensibility of jazz artistry. And I think that that's something that is gonna make this album one of my favorites as the year winds down. N.T.: One thing that is very well known or well talked about in pop music is finding the hook, and Barbara Sfraga, in the tunes that she's written for this album has managed to find hooks that, I think, really catch the imagination. Here's one on a tune -- in fact, the title track -- "Timelessness Frozen in Time," the hook comes in about a minute into the part that we're hearing, but you'll hear it. (plays sound clip of "Timelessness Frozen in Time") N.T.: There's that little hook I told you about. Barbara Sfraga and her band Center Search Quest wrote almost all the music on this new album called "Timelessness Frozen in Time." But one tune written by Stevie Wonder and made famous by Chaka Khan, she does, and a little insouciance in the phrasing makes it sound new -- and hers. Which is pretty hard when it was originally done by Chaka Khan. N.T.: Barbara Sfraga, the new album called "Timelessness Frozen in Time." It's on SyncTimiCity Records. This is pop music at its best I think - at its best on the album, but also as good as I'd want to hear pop music ever done. And I think the reason for that is because the musicians are not trying to do something they don't believe in, but they also have the ability to bring more to the table than most pop musicians do...taking on the guise, the trappings, of a pop music approach, but with the sensibility of jazz artistry. And I think that that's something that is gonna make this album one of my favorites as the year winds down. (listenhereradio.com) JazzUSA.com, Stephen H. Watkins Sfraga is a throwback to the days of vocal jazz and improvisational creativity. Barbara's musical focus evolved from church organist to rock keyboardist to jazz singer to voicist, giving her a rounded perspective on writing and producing tracks. "Under the Moon," which was one of the good projects released by the now-defunct A440 Records, and "Oh, What a Thrill" (Naxos Jazz) had a few of her originals sprinkled throughout, but she was primarily known for her unconventional twists on jazz and pop standards (pops-terdizing jazz and jazz-terdizing pop, as she says.) Her new CD blends her strong, beautiful voice with a new group of musicians and emphasizes her writing skills more than previous CDs. Joined by Christopher Dean Sullivan, Michael "T.A." Thompson, Mala Waldron and Allen Won (collectively known as Center Search Quest), Sfraga and the group are genre-bending their way to a whole new sound. All five musicians lend their creative - and sometimes their physical - voices to this project. There is even some three part harmony in the rocket-paced "Cool Water" which is as close to scatting as you can get without actually

doing it. Chris Sullivan refers to himself as a Bass Artisan on the notes and you'll feel what he means when you follow his bass moves and changes as they carry Barbara along on "Love Breaks Free." Her take on the Rufus classic "Tell Me Something Good" is 180 from the original, filled with clever phrasing and some nice sax work by Allen Won, and even a little spoken word... another fine example of jazz-sterdizing an R&B track. My favorite is "Tell Me," both for the lyrical beauty and the musical groove. Somewhere between Pharaoh Sanders and Tania Maria, this track works a melodious magic on the listener carrying you off to wherever it is that Sfraga is holding your imagination. It's music without borders! With roots firmly planted in jazz and with the improvisational element always in place, Sfraga and CSQ are on a quest to leave no groove unturned. Dig it. It's an extraordinary "community." Five stellar musicians, each with their own particular projects on the move, banded together in the last few years to pool their energies and distinctly individual voices to form one unit. Not that any of these fine artists have let their personal projects go - quite the contrary - they are all gaining momentum. It's amazing to watch - like a finely tuned elaborate machine, gears catch the next connection flawlessly. The ever-dreaded conflicts that threaten to trip up most emerging bands don't even get a chance to materialize in this one. "Intention", says Michael T.A. Thompson. T.A., as he likes to be called, is quite the personality. He'll sum up in one word what it takes others volumes to convey. "Intention. It's simple." (a phrase you'll hear him say often.) "But it is. Just think about it - we're very clear on our intention and how we move things. From the get-go we knew what we had and have. The question was, how do we get all these projects up and running with everybody doing their own thing? There's a lot of energy here and it doesn't stop with these five people. Our collective question always is, how can we move this and simultaneously propel all these other projects at the same time? Community - that's how. No one is alone." It's a sentiment that's reflected quite vividly throughout their music.

Sonja Carter Artist Information Instrumentation: Voicist
Barbara Sfraga (vocals) Bass Artisan Christopher Dean Sullivan (acoustic electric basses, words, sounds) Soundrhythium Michael "T.A." Thompson (drums, percussion, vocal and rhythmic vibrations) Pianist/Keyboardist/Vocalist Mala Waldron (keys and vocals) Multi-reedist Allen Won (saxophones and flutes)

Biography BIO: Described as "consistently inventive" (Billboard), "a master of bold interpretation" (Jazz Times), "jazz singing at its cutting edge best" (LA Times), Barbara Sfraga has been on a musical journey that evolved from church organist to rock keyboardist to singer to "voicist". In 1989, "bass artisan" Christopher Dean Sullivan met kindred spirit "soundrhythium" Michael "T.A." Thompson and collaborated

to form Center Search Quest, offering some of the most fun, unbridled jazz you'll ever hear. Center Search Quest is just that: a search for the center of sound and vibration. This ensemble taps into each other's spirit in such a way that their improvisations become spontaneous compositions. When they ultimately fall into a tune, it's a purely organic occurrence. All walls are down, everything is up for grabs and anything can happen. Barbara stepped into the "Quest" in 2002, after hearing Chris and "T.A." perform at Harlem's Lenox Lounge Monday night sessions. Barbara instantly knew she had found her kindred spirits, and the three embarked on yet another odyssey. They collaborated together throughout the course of the next 2 years (voice/bass/drums), performing some of Barbara's originals as well as their unconventional arrangements of jazz and pop standards. During that time, "T.A." made a comment to Barbara that what she needed to do next was an entirely original project. Although she had a few of her originals sprinkled on her previous two recordings ("Oh, What a Thrill", Naxos Jazz and "Under the Moon", A440 Music Group) she was more known for her unconventional twists on jazz and pop standards (pops-terdizing jazz and jazz-terdizing pop...) In 2003, "T.A." and triple threat pianist/vocalist/songwriter Mala Waldron began a writing collaboration. Shortly thereafter, they surprised Barbara with material they had written expressly for her, with the invitation to write lyrics to any of the tunes she resonated with. That "gift" put this present journey into motion. Soon after, the unit began regularly writing together toward what would become 'The Timelessness Project'. Mala Waldron - who also leads her own group - officially joined the unit in the summer of 2004, and saxophonist/flautist Allen Won came on board shortly after that. After Barbara and Michael heard Allen at a festival where both groups were performing, they knew he was that missing piece of the puzzle - the perfect fit. Collaborating with these stellar musicians, Sfraga and Center Search Quest are genre-bending their way to a whole new sound. With roots firmly planted in jazz and with the improvisational element always in place, Sfraga and CSQ are on a quest to leave no groove unturned. All five musicians lend their creative -- as well as their physical -- voices to this project in three part harmony, with a little spoken word thrown into the pot. Its music without borders. Sfraga and CSQ's newest recording, due to be released September 2006 features mostly their original material. They sprinkle their live performances with a few boldly arranged, yet familiar surprises. Mala Waldron, Allen Won and Center Search Quest's Christopher Dean Sullivan and Michael "T.A." Thompson also lead their own units respectively. You can read more about those projects, as well as more about Barbara and her prior projects through the website links below. Barbara Sfraga, barbarasfraga.com Center Search Quest

(Christopher Dean Sullivan Michael "T.A." Thompson), drimala.com/artists/csq.htm Mala Waldron, alwaysthere-CD.com Allen Won, allenwon.com "Bass Artisan"/Songwriter Christopher Dean Sullivan is a versatile bassist of many musical languages: reggae, Caribbean, Indian, African, and Eurocentric perceptions, rock, country, and more. Chris can be heard on CDs from acoustic folk and blues music to gospel. Mr. Sullivan's approach is heartfelt and is accessed first of all by intensive listening -- to himself, to the elemental structure of a tune, to the soul of his fellow musicians, and to his own quest for the purest, more direct expression of sound and feeling. "Soundrhythm"/Songwriter Michael T.A. Thompson is an anomaly. That's why you'll often find him in the company of such a wide variety of musical artists from classical to rap and beyond. Allowing all these influences to flow through him, "T.A."s palate encompasses an abundance of sound colors. He hears everything, and plays with it in a way that's ever inventive and perceptively responsive. Thompson plays as he breathes - he brings to the stage a distinct freshness. You'll always find him in the moment, inspired as well as inspiring. Mr. Thompson is also an instructor of non-conventional rudiments that brings the student into a rhythm of self-identity.

Pianist/Vocalist/Songwriter Mala Waldron attributes the musical influences of jazz, soul, gospel, and a hint of calypso while creating her distinctive style. The daughter of two jazz pianists, the native New Yorker feels she was destined to be a musician. Her father, pianist and composer Mal Waldron, became her first role model, and taught her that great things can be accomplished when you take your dreams seriously. Mala's own group, The Mala Waldron Project, is a dynamic and cohesive unit that includes guitarist Steve Salerno, bassist Miriam Sullivan and "soundrhythm" Michael "T.A." Thompson, performing Mala's original compositions as well as her artfully arranged jazz and pop standards.

alwaysthere-CD.com Multi-Reedist/Flautist/Composer Allen Won has embraced a diverse career. Allen's eclectic performance itinerary has encompassed playing with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, many of the orchestras in and around New York including the New York Philharmonic, the New York City Ballet, the City Opera, The New Jersey Philharmonic and various jazz and experimental groups. He has recorded along with Kenny Garrett, Thomas Chapin, John Hollenbeck, Theo Bleckmann, Jerome Kitzke, Benny Rietveld and Tiger Okoshi. The Jewel in the Lotus is his first solo recording featuring his own compositions. allenwon.com Website barbarasfraga.com Discography Barbara Sfraga Center Search Quest, "Timelessness Frozen in Time", street date: September 5, 2006 Barbara Sfraga, "Under The Moon", A440 Music Group, #4025, 2003 Barbara Sfraga, "Oh, What A Thrill", Naxos Jazz #86047,

1999 Christopher Dean Sullivan and Michael "T.A." Thompson with Joe Giardulo, "Language of Swans",
Drimala, #DR02-347-05, 2002 Allen Won, "Jewel in the Lotus", 2004 Mala Waldron, "Always There",
Soulful Sound Music, SS22241, street date, March 15, 2006

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