

**CHIARA IZZI** – *Jazz Singer, Songwriter, Composer*

<http://www.chiaraizzi.com>

[izzichiara@yahoo.it](mailto:izzichiara@yahoo.it)

*“It’s very important for me to make music as a peacemaker, to work creating bridges between different worlds, to put different cultures in communication starting from the music.”* – Chiara Izzi

*“Chiara is one of the rare artists that we get the pleasure to meet a few times in our life.”* – Kevin Hays

\* \* \* \*

Chiara Izzi is an award-winning singer-songwriter from Italy who has been based in New York City since 2014, three years after **Quincy Jones** awarded her first prize in the 2011 Montreux International Jazz Festival Vocal Competition. Since arriving, she’s become one of New York’s busiest vocalists, sharing bandstands with such luminaries as Kevin Hays, Leon Parker, Ken Peplowski, Diego Figueiredo, Jeff Hamilton, Aaron Goldberg, Bruce Barth, Eliot Zigmund, Warren Wolf, and Anthony Wonsey.

Izzi first documented her formidable talents on her well-received 2013 debut album, *Motifs* (Dot-Time), singing in English, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese on an 11-track program that spanned the American and Brazilian Songbooks, Tango, high-level Euro-Pop, and Mainstream Jazz Vocalese and Scat. Izzi navigated each idiom fluently, on its own terms of engagement, displaying her prodigious vocal instrument, refined musicianship, inherent soulfulness, and ability to convey both emotional transparency and ebullient swing. In an *All About Jazz* review Michael Bailey praised Izzi as “force of nature,” while in *Jazz Times* Travis Rogers described her as “a talent to be heard, admired and anticipated.”

How that talent has evolved and blossomed since Izzi moved to New York is apparent on her 2019 release, *Across The Sea* (Jando), a cooperative project with pianist Kevin Hays who says about Izzi: “There was a sense of sincerity and honesty — a lack of artifice. She has an inner strength that I think is rare”. The rising star and established master, functioning as equal collaborators, address well-wrought original pieces and lyrics by each protagonist and highly personalized interpretations of songs from composers and songwriters who both artists love and admire.

Izzi began her musical journey in Campobasso, a city of 50,000 that is the capital of the Molise region of southeastern Italy, situated between Rome and Naples. Before focusing exclusively on singing during her teens, she studied classical piano seriously for almost a decade. She recalls first singing at 8 years old, and continued to sing while participating in various school functions. At 17 she was referred to the president of Campobasso’s Thelonious Monk School, which Izzi describes as “a small, very good jazz school with teachers who were professional musicians – they suggested that I study piano jazz and singing.” Not long after embarking on her jazz studies, Izzi formed her first band with several fellow students, with whom she participated in an immersive week-long event in Belgium that involved singing every day with a cohort of

musicians from around the world. “Before that experience, I’d been wavering whether I liked jazz or not,” Izzi says. “But I really enjoyed the traveling, being placed in the position of being put on the spot, improvising on stage with strangers without even rehearsing, which is less possible in other genres. When I got home I decided I wanted to do this forever”.

Rather than enroll in a conservatory, Izzi worked towards a Bachelors degree in Communications and Media in Campobasso, and learned by doing. “I started to go deeper into jazz, listening to records, finding my own way,” she says. After earning her Bachelors Degree with a dissertation that explored the implications of an encounter between cellist Yo-Yo Ma and kabuki actor Tamasaburo Bando, Izzi enrolled in the Conservatory of Frosinone, near Rome, where she earned a Masters Degree in Jazz Music in 2012, graduating with honors. During these years, she performed extensively with her group, and joined various rhythm sections in different European locales. She also participated in several jazz competitions, winning first prize in Barga Jazz in 2009 and the prestigious Italian contest Lucca Jazz Donna 2010, while earning finalist honors in the International Jazz Competition Scrivere in Jazz, in Sassari (Italy) and at Voicingers 2012 (Poland) from a jury that included Patricia Barber, Lars Danielsson and Thierry Quenum.

In 2011, Izzi sent a demo to the Montreux International Jazz Festival Vocal Competition, made it past the initial screening and ended up being awarded first place from the living legend Quincy Jones, president of the jury of that year’s competition. In addition to a consequential cash prize, a voucher from competition sponsor Shure Microphone, an invitation to do her set at the 2012 Montreux Jazz Festival, and the all-expenses-paid recording session that generated *Motifs*, she received sage advice from Quincy Jones, who told her: “Sister you are very, very talented. You should go to the U.S., because you have to improve your craft.” “That helped me gain the initial confidence to think bigger,” Izzi says. “I believed in myself and enjoyed my music, but I hadn’t thought of myself as an international singer. Then I decided it was time to think about moving to New York.”

Upon her arrival in August 2014, Izzi took an apartment in Harlem and began making the rounds of New York’s clubs, using the *Motifs* CD as a calling card. She also quickly found leader and sidemen engagements at Iridium, Smalls Jazz Club, Blue Note, 55 Bar, Birdland Jazz Club, The Kennedy Center. “My own music includes Brazilian influences, influences from classical music, and things from Pop and Jazz. I take ideas from whatever music I feel an affinity with, and then I try to make it my own. That’s the important thing for me. Otherwise I couldn’t express myself, and I’d probably get bored with myself, too, which I hate to do on stage.”

Chiara’s future projects include a prospective album of Izzi’s original music with her band, and a forthcoming duo album on Dot Time Records with pianist Andrea Rea culled from a live December 2018 recording session in Bremen, Germany, on which she primarily performs songs in Italian and Spanish.