

DEANNA WITKOWSKI- 3 bios

Short bio:

Known for her adventurous, engaging music that heals the soul, pianist, composer, and author **Deanna Witkowski** moves with remarkable ease between Brazilian, jazz, classical, and sacred music. Her first book, *Mary Lou Williams: Music For The Soul* (Liturgical Press), published in September 2021, is the winner of the 2022 ASCAP Foundation Deems Taylor/Virgil Thomson Award and the 2022 Jazz Journalists Association Award for Biography of the Year. Her seventh recording, *Force of Nature* (MCG Jazz), released in January 2022, reached number five on the JazzWeek nationwide radio chart and remained in the top ten most played albums on jazz radio for more than ten weeks.

Witkowski's explosive performances combine virtuosity and heart, telling stories that reveal her innate curiosity of the human condition. She has recorded with Grammy nominees John Patitucci, Kate McGarry, and Donny McCaslin, and has performed and toured with renowned vocalists Lizz Wright, Nnenna Freelon, Erin Bode, Filó Machado, and Vanessa Rubin. A frequent winner of composition competitions for her concert and sacred choral pieces, Witkowski has received funding for new work from the New York State Council on the Arts (for her Afro-Brazilian project, the *Nossa Senhora Suite*) and the Choral Arts Initiative PREMIERE | Project Festival.

Medium bio:

Known for her adventurous, engaging music that heals the soul, pianist, composer, and author **Deanna Witkowski** moves with remarkable ease between Brazilian, jazz, classical, and sacred music. Her first book, *Mary Lou Williams: Music For The Soul* (Liturgical Press), published in September 2021, is the winner of the 2022 ASCAP Foundation Deems Taylor/Virgil Thomson Award and the 2022 Jazz Journalists Association Award for Biography of the Year. Her seventh recording, *Force of Nature* (MCG Jazz), released in January 2022, reached number five on the JazzWeek nationwide radio chart and remained in the top ten most played albums on jazz radio for more than ten weeks.. The two projects cap a twenty-year deep dive into the groundbreaking impact of Williams' life and music, making Witkowski one of the few living authorities on the iconic pianist. As a sought after Williams expert, she has presented at the Kennedy Center, Duke University, Fordham University, and performed Williams' compositions as a featured guest with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra.

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A prolific choral composer, Witkowski has won multiple competitions for her concert and sacred works. Commissions and new compositions have been funded by organizations including the New York State Council on the Arts (for her Afro-Brazilian project, the *Nossa Senhora Suite*) and the Choral Arts Initiative PREMIERE | Project Festival.

Witkowski is a third-year PhD student at the University of Pittsburgh. Experience her work at deannajazz.com.

Long bio:

Known for her adventurous, engaging music that heals the soul, pianist, composer, and author **Deanna Witkowski** moves with remarkable ease between Brazilian, jazz, classical, and sacred music. Her first book, *Mary Lou Williams: Music For The Soul* (Liturgical Press), published in September 2021, is the winner of the 2022 ASCAP Foundation Deems Taylor / Virgil Thomson Award and the 2022 Jazz Journalists Association Award for Biography of the Year. Her seventh recording, *Force of Nature* (MCG Jazz), released in January 2022, reached number five on the JazzWeek nationwide radio chart and remained in the top ten most played albums on jazz radio for more than ten weeks. The two projects cap a twenty-year deep dive into the groundbreaking impact of Williams' life and music, making Witkowski one of the few living authorities on the iconic pianist. As a sought after Williams expert, she has presented at the Kennedy Center, Duke University, Fordham University, and performed Williams' compositions as a featured guest with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra.

In concert and on recordings, Witkowski's explosive performances combine virtuosity and heart, telling stories that reveal her innate curiosity of the human condition. Her albums range from powerhouse arrangements of Cole Porter standards (*Wide Open Window; Length of Days*) to sparkling trio re-imaginings of traditional hymns (*Makes the Heart to Sing: Jazz Hymns*) to solo piano that blurs the lines between Brazilian, jazz, and classical (*Raindrop: Improvisations with Chopin*). Witkowski has recorded with Grammy nominees John Patitucci, Kate McGarry, and Donny McCaslin, and has performed and toured with renowned vocalists Lizz Wright, Nnenna Freelon, Erin Bode, Filó Machado, and Vanessa Rubin.

Dedicated to bringing communities together through jazz, Witkowski has worked as a guest music leader in over one hundred churches across the United States. Her weekly video series, "Off the Page: Sacred Jazz," shares practical resources for church musicians and her jazz hymn arrangements have been purchased by over 500 churches.

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Following in the steps of her chosen soul companion and lifelong mentor, Witkowski relocated to Mary Lou Williams' hometown of Pittsburgh in 2020. She is a third-year doctoral student in jazz studies at the University of Pittsburgh. Experience her work at deannajazz.com.