

BIOGRAPHY

Peter's about to be released recording, *One Mind*, is something of a departure for him. A close collaboration with bassist Marcos Varela, it's a quartet set that also includes Billy Drummond on drums, and acclaimed saxophonist Seamus Blake. The album features several new compositions and arrangements, and veers into some surprising musical paths.

Peter's well-received previous release, *Standards*, remains a culminating example of his efforts as a jazz pianist and bandleader. A trio session that features his recent frequent collaborator, drummer Billy Drummond, and a newer bandmate, bassist Jay Anderson, the recording demonstrates the fluidity, knowledge and command that he has developed over more than twenty years of performing and recording with some of the world's best jazz musicians.

Peter Zak was born on May 13, 1965, in Los Angeles and grew up in Columbus and Kent, Ohio. When he was five, his mother taught him the basics of piano playing and reading music, and after six months, he began a decade-long series of private lessons, including a period with internationally renowned concert pianist Margaret Baxtresser. After the family moved to Oakland when Zak was 16, he developed an interest in jazz when his high school band director showed him how to play the chord changes to *Stella* by Starlight. Studies with Susan Muscarella, now president of the California Jazz Conservatory, followed at UC Berkeley, where he also played in the UC Jazz Ensembles and earned a B.A. in history. He was soon gigging around Northern California with saxophonist John Handy, among others.

Since relocating to New York, he has performed and/or recorded with Junior Cook, George Coleman, Jimmy Cobb, Billy Hart, Ryan Kisor, Etta Jones, Scott Hamilton, Peter Bernstein, Al Foster, Eric Alexander, Curtis Stigers, Walt Weiskopf, and Jon Hendricks, among many others. Peter is also a faculty member in the renowned jazz program at New School University.

In 2005, Peter received a prestigious \$10,000 grant from the Doris Duke Foundation and Chamber Music America to compose and perform a new work for his jazz trio, featuring Al Foster and Paul Gill. The first of two performances of this three-part suite took place at Smoke Jazz Club, and the second at the Jazz Gallery, both in New York City.

Since 2005, Peter has released a series of critically acclaimed recordings for the Danish jazz label, SteepleChase Records. His first release for the company, *The Peter Zak Trio*, featuring drummer Al Foster, and bassist Paul Gill, appeared that year. Subsequent releases include *For Tomorrow*, featuring Paul Gill and drummer Willie Jones III, in 2006; a solo piano album, *My Conception*, in 2007; *Seed Of Sin*, featuring Paul Gill and drummer Quincy Davis, in 2008; *Blues on the Corner: The Music of McCoy Tyner*, again featuring Paul Gill and Quincy Davis, in 2009; and *The Decider*, a quartet album including Walt Weiskopf on saxophones, Ugonna Okegwo on bass, and drummer Billy Drummond.

Down East, a trio date featuring Peter Washington and Billy Drummond, appeared in the spring of 2011. Among the enthusiastic national and international press for this release was a profile in the September, 2011, issue of *DownBeat* magazine. This release was followed by *Nordic Noon*, in 2012, *The Eternal Triangle*, in 2013, and *The Disciple* in 2014, which reached #2 on the Jazz Week radio chart.

Peter remains quite busy as a recording sideman as well. His dozens of credits include the recent albums Day In, Night Out, See the Pyramid, Overdrive, and Open Road by Walt Weiskopf; Pendulum, by Mike Richmond; Another Scene and Back East by Doug Webb; Stephen Riley's Deuce, Lover, Baubles, Bangles and Beads and Haunted Heart; Ryan Kisor's Live at Smalls, and Tom Guarna's Major Minor, among many others.

Peter leads his own groups at various venues in and around New York, such as Smalls, Mezzrow, The Kitano, and Smoke, as well as leading national and international appearances, including recent performances at the Copenhagen Jazz Festival, the Zacatecas jazz festival in Mexico, and a tour of Canada as a co-leader with saxophonist Walt Weiskopf. At the same time, he has been performing regularly as a sideman with a host of other artists, including Jim Snidero, Peter Bernstein, Ryan Kisor, Jimmy Cobb, Walt Weiskopf, Carlos Abadie, Doug Webb, and many others, both in the U.S and internationally. In 2011, Peter performed with the Brooklyn Philharmonic as the featured soloist on Gershwin's I Got Rhythm Variations.