

A SMALL DREAM IN RED



Nora McCarthy – Voice

Jorge Sylvester – Alto Saxophonist

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

“Nora McCarthy and Jorge Sylvester achieve the unique immediacy of music in abstract visual form in their duo performances, an innovative form of musical expression wherein each work reveals a self-contained world of content, form, improvisation, and - above all - balance.” ...Ramsey Ameen

A Small Dream In Red officially debuted at the Knitting Factory in NYC on September 10, 2001 however their first performance was at the Orange Bear in NYC in 2000 for a party held in honor of Cecil Taylor’s birthday who was in the audience that evening.

In March, 2003, they recorded their first CD, *A Small Dream In Red*, a live performance captured at Cleveland State University at the Sundown Jazz Series. The CD, a compilation of original compositions and standards, garnered wonderful reviews and established them as one of the world’s most unique and innovative duos performing in this format and instrumentation. .

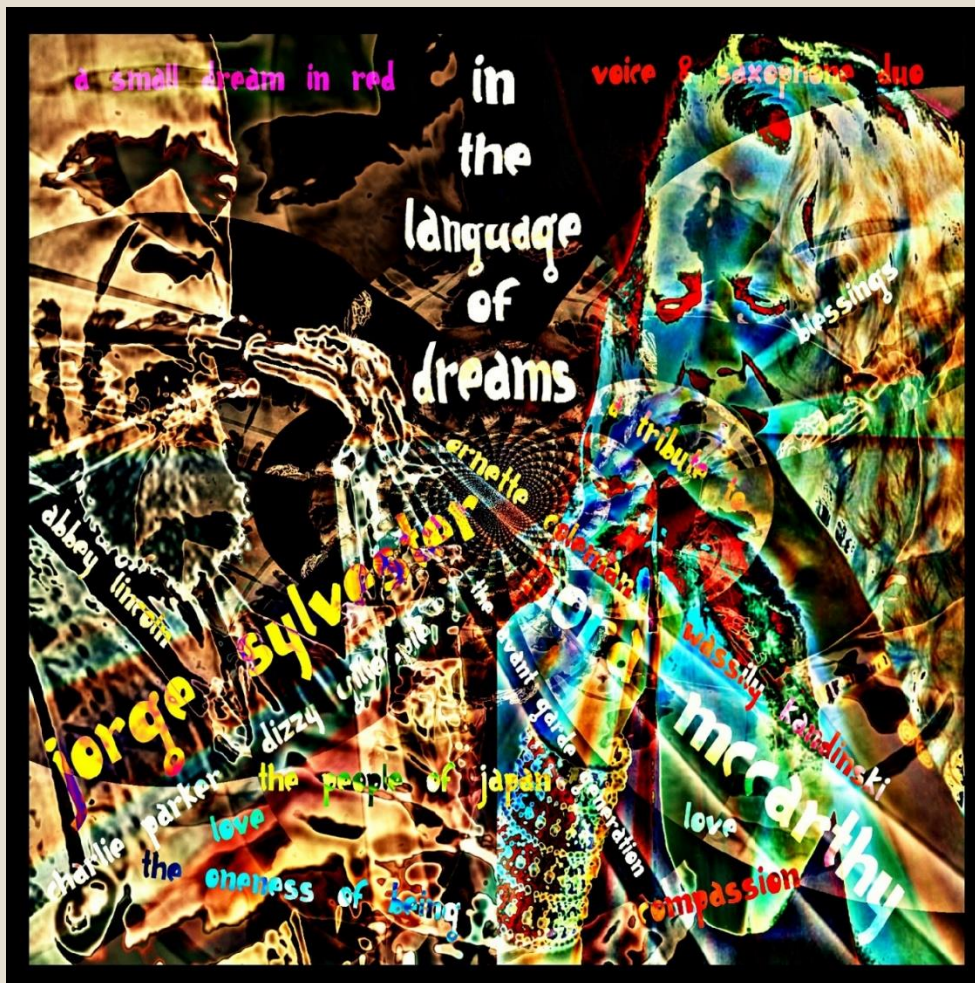
In the Spring of 2007 A Small Dream In Red, conducted a weeklong series of workshops that culminated in a first-of-its-kind sold out concert in Podgorica, Montenegro before an enthusiastic and attentive audience followed by an appearance on the television show Good Morning Montenegro.

They have performed for over eighteen years throughout New York at well known jazz and avant-garde venues, galleries and schools and have also appeared in concert in Linz, Austria and Panama City, Panama.

Their CD, *In The Language Of Dreams*, is a tribute to Ornette Coleman, master innovator of the free jazz movement and Wassily Kandinsky,

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abstractionist painter and master of modern art. It features original compositions by both McCarthy and Sylvester, poetry, interpretations of the five of Kandinsky's paintings as well as two Ornette compositions that McCarthy wrote lyrics for, an heirloom standard, a Gaelic Hymn, a composition of the great poetic song stylist, Abbey Lincoln and a compelling piece dedicated to the people of Japan.



A Small Dream In Red is a ground-breaking duo whose powerful artistic expression is centered around the alto voice and alto saxophone. Through improvisation, deconstruction, interpretation, expansion, innovation and storytelling they arrange aural and visual elements into moving images, new shapes, designs and sounds.

SMALL DREAM IN RED

kleiner traum in rot

“The expressionist master Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944), who painted the masterpiece, *Small Dream In Red* (kleiner traum in rot) in 1925, believed that the relationship between colors and sounds, between music and painting, is not only theory but actually exists; and all I can add is that when I saw this painting in a museum many years after it was painted, I looked at it and heard it ... just as its painter wished it to be viewed ... visually and aurally ... abstract to be sure but closer to tangible palpable physical material reality, than reality itself.

The music of A SMALL DREAM IN RED comes from that reality, exploring visual elements from a musical standpoint – repetition, inversion, variation, dynamic intensification and diminution translating visual impressions into aural terms. The music is inspired and imbued with life, consisting of primal earthen tones and elements with slightly representational associations.” Nora McCarthy



Author: Ramsey Ameen - For A Gathering of the Tribes Magazine, 12/2005

“As a duo, Nora and Jorge perform under the name “A Small Dream in Red”, thereby acknowledging a deep affinity to Wassily Kandinsky—the artistic pioneer whose quintessential goal was to achieve the unique immediacy of music in abstract visual form. Incredibly, Nora and Jorge have achieved, in their duo performances, an innovative form of musical expression comparable in impact to Kandinsky’s paintings, wherein each work reveals a self-contained world of content, form, improvisation, and—above all—balance.

The path to Kandinsky’s level of creative achievement is an exacting and unfamiliar path, exemplified at the highest level within the jazz tradition by Coleman Hawkins’ unprecedented solo tenor saxophone masterpieces, “Picasso” and “Dali.” In this context jazz claims its rightful place as one of the great achievements of 20th century modernity. To work in this challenging artistic realm requires exceptional integrity and unrelenting honesty. Thelonious Monk, the preeminent standard bearer of musical originality, whose artistic mentor was none other than Coleman Hawkins, specifically and significantly described his own music, with its harmonies and rhythms that to this day astound the most accomplished musicians, as simply “modern music.”

Modernity as exemplified by Kandinsky and Monk is distinguished by a striking clarity of expression focused in the present moment. This clarity and presence is the ideal to which Nora McCarthy and Jorge Sylvester have aspired in their duo, “A Small Dream in Red”. The abstract dimension of these artists’ work, often misunderstood as a stylistic choice, is a necessary key to the focused “Now!” at the heart of their work. Abstraction

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enables a clear distinction between the essential and the superfluous, and so can serve as a catalyst for powerful artistic expression.

How does artistic integrity and honesty survive in an ecology of contemporary human endeavor that encompasses planet-devouring multinational commodity markets and mass-produced suicide bombers? Where is a work of art secure from being submerged by an incessant, attention-deficit inducing global torrent of mass-marketed, streaming media?

For Nora McCarthy and Jorge Sylvester, in confronting such questions, there is no choice but to trust the gift of inspiration with the humility and care borne of craftsmanship and discipline, and to give authentic voice to the vital, microcosmic "Now!" at the core of artistic modernity. These artists' work is truly deserving of notice and consideration, because it is work arising out of human necessity, not aesthetic preference. As a result of years of intensive collaboration, their hard-won synergy has enabled them to stake an honest claim to the modern artist's highest ground—clarity of expression."

A Small Dream In Red Recorded Live at the Sundown Jazz Concert Series at Cleveland State University 2003

Review Blurbs

"...McCarthy reinvents several all-time Jazz classics by scatting, singing, and intoning over the free improvisations pouring assertively from Sylvester's alto. McCarthy delivers with absolute clarity, adding engrossing touches to the melody lines but primarily constructing original versions of the tunes." *Cadence Magazine for Creative and Improvised Music, 2005*

"...Nora McCarthy has a deep voice, with the timbre and range of Sarah Vaughan....she uses ever-so-subtle pitch-bending and straight tones and just a lovely touch of vibrato." *Julianne Carney, International Society For Improvised Music, 2007*

"...The duo of Nora McCarthy and Jorge Sylvester presents contrasting contours stepping into and out of dissonance, with hints of tunes weaving in and out, far more scat than lyric in the vocals, and saxophone is fluid, giving energy, direction and depth." *International Society For Improvised Music, 2007*

"...It's delightful to hear music that plays so freely with the known and the unknown elements of jazz." *All About Jazz Magazine, NY 2005*

"...A superb, contemporary jazz duo that forges its own trail. You can't sit back and say that she recalls this or that singer or that he recalls this or that alto saxophonist. They're both soulful, dramatic and highly original in their intimate recitals, which include self-penned songs as well as several highly original interpretations." *Ramsey Ameen, musician, scholar, educator formerly with Cecil Taylor*

"...Nora McCarthy sings with an emphatic delivery. She interprets lyrics with fits of passion and relaxes casually with wordless sprees." *Carlo Wolfe, Cleveland Plain Dealer*

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"...Alto saxophonist Jorge Sylvester brings a character of virtuosity to the session, conversing with his musical partner in an equal balance of their two voices. There's closeness in their duo performance that you don't find in some ensembles. " Jim Santella for Jazz Improv, NYC

"...Dreamy musical interplay mixed with fitful segments of dramatic tension." International Society For Improvised Music

"...McCarthy uses her fluid delivery to jump effortlessly to the highest and lowest regions of her vocal range, while Sylvester follows her cues in empathy. McCarthy's Miles Mind" carries a significant impression, as her voice recalls the frailty found in Davis' horn through the years." All About Jazz, 2006

"...The two artists combine intuition with a love for their music and it shows." Jim Santella for Jazz Improv, NYC, July, 2007

"...McCarthy and Sylvester show the utmost respect for the formal elements of music while also possessing the daring to dissolve borders, making A Small Dream In Red an aural adventure of the highest order. " Florence Wetzel, All About Jazz, NY

"... McCarthy's voice stretches and soars and whether she's singing straight ahead, scatting, or simply vocalizing, her voice rings true and clear. Sylvester has a gorgeous tone and a sure touch, plus a wonderful ability to weave in and out of melodies." All About Jazz, NY, 2005

"...Sylvester coats the pathways McCarthy carves with freelanced and fully open interpretations of the tunes, hitting high and low notes in juxtaposition or in contrast with the vocals." Cadence Magazine for Creative Improvised Music, 2005

