

# BRAITHWAITE & KATZ

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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **WORLD-RENOWNED, GRAMMY-NOMINATED COMPOSER MARIA SCHNEIDER RELEASES FIRST CD IN FOUR YEARS, "CONCERT IN THE GARDEN," JULY 1**

\* CD Is Schneider's First Entrée Into Online Marketing Realm, Featuring A Revolutionary New Approach Powered by ArtistShare \*

***"Jazz At Lincoln Center has never done anything more important than commissioning [the composition 'Bulerias, Soleas y Rumbas']... It is as tightly-woven and emotionally compelling as a symphony, and I think it ought to be seriously considered for next year's Pulitzer Prize in music." — Terry Teachout, Washington Post***

***"Schneider's music is like no other in the jazz world... [it is] the expression of a mature and complex musical mind, one that has found a unique and personal creative voice of its own." — Don Heckman, Los Angeles Times***

It has been nearly four years since the release of Maria Schneider's last studio recording, 2000's "Allégresse," and much has happened during that time. In addition to conducting clinics and concerts at schools in more than a dozen American states and performing with professional orchestras such as the Brussels Jazz Orchestra and the Danish Radio Big Band on three continents, she has also directed her own Maria Schneider Orchestra in California, Chicago, Minnesota, New Jersey and New York. During this time Schneider has also completed three stunning new commissioned works. All three works are featured on "Concert In The Garden," which will be released July 1, available only through [mariaschneider.com](http://mariaschneider.com), Schneider's new website, which is powered by ArtistShare.

A poem by Octavio Paz inspired Schneider's newest composition, *Concert in the Garden*, commissioned by Hunter College in New York City. Always exploring new sounds, she augmented her usual 17-piece jazz band by adding accordion and vocal parts. In fact, it was the piece's vocalist, Luciana Souza, who first shared the poem with Schneider. "From that moment on, the piece took direction and I found it—or maybe it found me," she says. The concert was premiered at The Kaye Playhouse in February 2004, after which arts critic Terry Teachout described the new work as, "a full-fledged piece of jazz impressionism, unusually rich and involving."

Dance is a major source of inspiration for Schneider, as illustrated by three sections making up a dance-inspired suite titled *Three Romances*. Commissioned by the University of Miami in 2000, Maria conducted the University jazz band for the October 2001 premiere of the Brazilian-infused "Choro Dançado," the French-influenced "Pas De Deux," and "Dança Ilusoria," a Brazilian-tinged foxtrot.

*Buleria, Solea y Rumba*, was commissioned by Jazz at Lincoln Center and premiered at Alice Tully Hall in January of 2003. Here, too, Schneider augmented the band, this time enhancing the flamenco flavor with the addition of vocalist Luciana Souza, as well as percussionists Gonzalo Grau and Jeff Ballard playing flamenco cajon. Again Teachout was in the audience, telling Washington Post readers: "It is as tightly woven and emotionally compelling as a symphony, and I think it ought to be seriously considered for next year's Pulitzer Prize in music."

Critics and fans alike have trouble labeling Schneider's music – is it jazz, or perhaps classical? When in doubt, ask the composer. Providing her own description, Schneider says, "My goal is to have a piece tell a story, taking the listener on a journey with the soloist acting as a character that brings the scene to life—like a great actor would be asked to bring something personal and unique to a role. In musical terms, the rhythmic and improvisational aspects of my work come from jazz. But my pieces are very developed in terms of the form, and that style of development comes more from the classical world. I'm really trying to evoke images or sensations. Hopefully, I take the listener on a trip. Basically, I would say this: I'm a storyteller—in life that's true, and in music, too."

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How does this differ from the traditional jazz approach? *"More often than not, jazz improvisations use the harmonic form of a song as a structure that repeats itself—the song being the theme, and the subsequent improvisations being somewhat like variations on the theme. Though my music occasionally follows that traditional form, most times it doesn't. My approach to form changes drastically from piece to piece. One piece is apt to wind and twist and develop, passing through various textures and temperaments."*

### In the past

Jazz may be her core, but Schneider has cut through the boundaries of the form to embrace a larger musical world, one that is accessible, no matter what you call it. Schneider, upon graduation from Eastman School of Music, became a protégé of Bob Brookmeyer (with whom she studied composition) and assistant to Gil Evans. She comments on how her music has developed since then. *"I think my music has started to more deeply reflect the world of music that I've enjoyed listening to in recent the last years. The rhythmic, harmonic and melodic flavors in my work are undoubtedly influenced by my love of Spanish, flamenco, and Brazilian music. Jazz is still at my core, but the intricacy and development one would find in classical music is more present. Even I become hard pressed to define my music."*

Schneider's debut recording, *Evanescence*, was nominated for two 1995 Grammy Awards: "Best Large Jazz Ensemble Performance," and, for its title piece, "Best Instrumental Composition." Her second and third recordings *Coming About* and *Allégresse* were also both nominated for Grammy Awards as well. Schneider received three Jazz Journalist Awards as "Best Composer," "Best Arranger," and "Best Big Band" for her Orchestra. She has won many of the DownBeat and JazzTimes Critics and Readers Polls. Her third album, *Allégresse*, was chosen by both Time and Billboard in their "Top Ten recordings of 2000," inclusive of all genres of music.

### Wide-ranging collaborations

While Schneider focuses almost exclusively on her own original compositions, her curiosity and willingness to collaborate led her to accept two interesting – and very diverse – arranging projects during the past year. Given her love of Brazilian music, it was impossible to refuse a request to arrange an entire show of **Ivan Lins** compositions to be played by the Brussels Jazz Orchestra and featuring not only Lins, but also Toots Thielemans. Schneider toured with that package last fall, and additional concerts are scheduled for this summer.

The second project was an arrangement for the hugely popular rock group **Phish**, which will appear on their upcoming CD, released in June 2004. "When [group leader and guitarist] Trey Anastasio approached me to do an arrangement, I was really excited. He came to me with a beautiful song called 'Secret Smile.' After sitting with it for a bit, I came up with a direction for it to go, and then met with Trey to see if my ideas resonated with him. He was really happy, so I proceeded to score it for a small string ensemble, and then went up to Vermont to their studio, The Barn, to record it. I really had a ball collaborating with Phish. Trey is so deeply enthusiastic and full of bright and positive energy for making music. He's exactly the kind of musician I love to be around. I hope to do many more collaborations of this sort." A conversation between Schneider and Anastasio can be found on Schneider's website, [MariaSchneider.com](http://MariaSchneider.com).

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