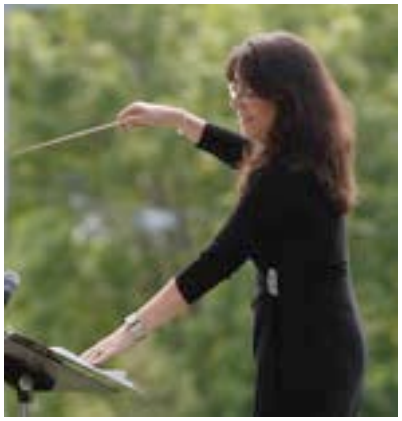ANITA BROWN JAZZ ORCHESTRA

CONTACT: E-mail: abrownjazzorch@aol.com Phone: 845-358-1634 Website: www.anitabrownmusic.com

Links: www.youtube.com/anitabrownjazz www.facebook.com/anitabrownjazzorchestra



Anita Brown Jazz Orchestra is a dynamic large ensemble that has enjoyed performing at New York area venues and festivals since 2000. Some of ABJO's favorite venues have included West Bank Café, Sweet Rhythm, Cachaca, Steinway Hall, Tea Lounge, Trumpets, Hudson House of Nyack, and area jazz festivals, at times hosting long-time friends as guest artists, including vocalist Judy Niemack, guitarist Jeanfrançois Prins, Brown's father, tenor saxophonist Ted Brown and the late Frank Wess.

Brown is an award-winning composer and an eight-year Fellow of the prestigious BMI Jazz Composers Workshop under the tutelage of Manny Albam, Jim McNeely and Mike Abene. She is the recipient of an ASCAP Award for New Big Band Music awarded by a panel including Bob Brookmeyer, Dave Douglas and John Clayton for ***The Lighthouse*** and was bestowed a Legislative Proclamation from The Rockland County Legislature for her large-scale work, ***Stand: A Symphony for Jazz Orchestra***, commemorating and depicting our national tragedy on 9/11 on its tenth anniversary. She was a participant in American Composers Orchestras' *Jazz Composers Orchestra Institute* at UCLA and was subsequently one of five composers invited to write a piece for The Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra. BPO premiered ***Disarming The Tempest*** in April 2013. Recently she was awarded a *2019 NYSCA Individual Artist Composer Commission* for ***Hart Island Suite*** as well as 2020 Project Grants from *NYFA* and *NewMusicUSA*. The piece is tied to NYC history through a poignant family story and offers a wide embrace for healing grief with its New Orleans-style second line jazz funeral in its finale. Rehearsals for its premiere scheduled for Spring 2020 were postponed due to the pandemic. Additional ensembles who have commissioned her include The Count Basie Orchestra, Jon Faddis Jazz Orchestra, Westchester Jazz Orchestra, The Center for Jazz Composition, The Frank Wess Nonet and vocalists Judi Silvano and Nnenna Freelon. Anita has also premiered original works with The Vanguard Jazz Orchestra under her baton at NYC's iconic jazz venue, The Village Vanguard.

ABJO is an ensemble of top New York players whose careers have woven the fabric of New York's jazz, Broadway and commercial session scenes for decades. Their collective credits include Maria Schneider, Toshiko Akiyoshi, Gotham, New York and The Vanguard Jazz Orchestras, Westchester Jazz Orchestra, Ed Palermo Big Band, NY State of the Arts Jazz Ensemble, BMI Jazz Composers Workshop Big Band, John Hollenbeck Large Ensemble, Maynard Ferguson, Woody Herman Big Band, Blood, Sweat & Tears, Natalie Cole, Donald Fagen, Steely Dan and Wicked, Spiderman, West Side Story, Frozen and countless more Broadway shows.

This ensemble has been described in the press as a 'blue-chip' ensemble, calling upon 'top drawer New York session players' including a 'platoon of persuasive soloists' breathing life into Ms. Brown's works with conviction and finesse. Anita has been described as a talented, 'original thinker' who writes with passion and 'fresh mind-expanding ideas.' She has a 'unique ear for dissonance and writes music that penetrates your very soul…with remarkable craftsmanship' which she conducts with skill, elegance and passion.

"Disarming charts... reveal myriad details of subtle wit and flexible spirit...using brass with the acumen and majesty of Johnny Richards...and wave-like riffs that break into Mingus-like backbeat."
--Fred Bouchard, DownBeat Magazine

"I've known Anita for a long time … she's developed into an important writer."
--Lee Konitz, Jazz Master Saxophonist

"Anita's compositions are marvelous tone poems… Serious, beautiful writing and a wonderful group. This band is in the same category as The Vanguard Jazz Orchestra and Maria Schneider."
--Marvin Stamm, Trumpet Artist

"Anita is better than she thinks she is. I would like to help her in any way I can."
--Bill Finegan, Composer/Arranger: The Sauter Finegan Band
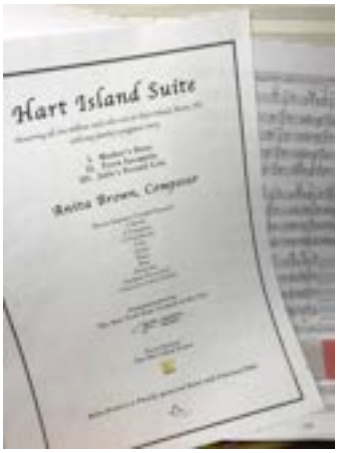
"Anita has swallowed and legitimately incorporated her influences and sounds only like herself."
--Larry Kart, Author of Jazz In Search of Itself

"The Lighthouse is favorably reminiscent of the works of Evans with Miles Davis on the legendary Sketches of Spain album. Ms. Brown has created a dense, gorgeous palette of sounds…an extremely talented composer who has much to say. Each piece is a musical trip through the places, people and events that have meaning in her life."
--Curtis Davenport, Jazz Improv Magazine

"Watching her conduct her ABJO performing her own music is to witness joy in its purest form...a journey full of power, depth and imagination." **--Dr. Judith Schlesinger,** Night and Disk: All About Jazz

Hart Island Suite

I. Mother's Story
II. Terra Incognita
III. Julie's Second Line



I. Mother's Story employs a melody I composed while visiting Hart Island in June 2017. Opening with a piano solo as my mother's voice on her primary instrument, it is interrupted by the vocalist's narration telling Mom's wrenching story of delivering a stillborn daughter, from her point of view. A tenor solo represents my father's voice on his primary instrument after which the vocalist closes the movement, finally stating the melody with lyrics.

II. Terra Incognita translates as Unknown Land. In its exposition it introduces Hart Island with stark, disjointed harmonies and unpredictable metrics to paint my mother's and the public's perception of Hart Island as a cold, dark and foreboding place. The text is from a lone headstone while the ostinato bass represents continuous grave-digging at the hands of Rikers Island prisoners. The trumpet solo and thickening harmony bring forth the voices of my sister and those interred around her, respectively. A reprise of the text in chorale treatment allows light into the long-standing dark image of Hart Island, giving way to a peaceful, gentle groove.

III. Julie's Second Line was conceived in the style of a traditional New Orleans Second-Line "Jazz" Funeral though my filter. I feel this celebratory movement is particularly appropriate for this daughter of two NYC jazz musicians whose relationship began as students of Lennie Tristano. As jazz has flourished in NYC, a most revered destination to experience our melting pot of American music, it seemed equally as prudent to offer this movement to all whose loved ones rest on Hart Island, and now, in 2021, to extend its embrace to all victims of COVID-19 and their families. In the traditional Second Line Funeral, the family, undertaker and hired musicians comprise *the first line* in the funerary procession, aka "the permit holder". If ***Anita Brown Jazz Orchestra*** is "the permit holder" the *Second Line* is all other family, friends, musicians and admirers of the deceased whose soul is being celebrated in the procession *Home,* thereby embracing all family and friends of those who rest on Hart Island, as they are indeed, the Second Line. With this movement we celebrate ***Julie***, and all one million souls, with improvised solos by band members and friends representing the Second Line.





Hart Island Suite honors a family member and all one million souls who rest on Hart Island, NYC's public cemetery, Bronx, NY, and now includes victims of COVID-19, embracing their loved ones. Hart Island sits in the Long Island Sound, east of City Island. As burials were rendered by prisoners from Rikers Island, it was under the jurisdiction of the Department of Corrections. Until recently visitation was not allowed. The Hart Island Project's hard work achieved visitation for family members possessing a death certificate and has been by appointment, under armed guard due to the frequency of prisoner presence on the island. On December 4, 2019 Mayor DiBlasio signed a package of bills into law to transfer its jurisdiction to the Department of Parks by July 2021 and fast-tracked the transition due to the pandemic. Please use **#hartislandsuite** (Above photos: View from City Island)



Southbound view of Hart Island; Throgs Neck Bridge in the background

Hart Island Suite was made possible by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo, the New York State Legislature and The Hart Island Project.

#hartislandsuite