

VIRGINIA CONSTANTINE QUINTET



Virginia's family gave her the ideal basis for a career in music. Her father Jean Constantin, wrote songs for Edith Piaf, Yves Montand and signed the music score for the François Truffaut' film « the 400 blows » while her mother, the singer-actress Lucie Dolene is the most popular French voice of Snow-White, the legendary Walt Disney cartoon character. Virginia's repertoire consists of the great Jazz classics from Gershwin to Cole Porter, especially those featuring in films from the Hollywood era. The emotional intimacy which comes out of her vocal performance draws the audience deep in the heart of these unforgettable melodies and to do so, she's surrounded by four highly talented musicians...



After studying classical piano for 10 years, Virginia opted for a singing career and by the age of sixteen, started performing the Paris Jazz scene. A couple of years later, she got her first contract as a backing vocalist alongside popular artists such as Gilbert Bécaud, Michel Sardou and Laurent Voulzy which included studio recordings, touring Europe and appearing on television. Other professional engagements include singing for commercials, films and lending her voice to Marilyn Monroe in the musical show « Bonheur » which played for over 10 years at the Lido of Paris music hall.

By the mid-nineties, she moved to London to further her career as a singer/songwriter, getting interest from Pete Waterman and Keith Wozencroft , the man who discovered the band Radiohead . He offered her a deal with EMI but she finally signed up to ECHO, an independant label which allowed her to collaborate with different songwriters among which Dennis Lambert, the other half of the famous American partnership « Potter and Lambert » who co-wrote many hits throughout the Motown era. During that period , she also recorded a Jazz album entitled " The bumpy road to love " featuring some of the best musicians in the UK such as the famous guitarist Jim Mullen and the sax player Gary Barnacle, who played for Jamiroquai and the Brand New Heavies amongst others.

On the French side, she sang with the JMH Jazz Trio recording the album Complicity (2009) and performing at the Saint Maur Jazz festival alongside the great French drummer Manu Katche. Other live performances include the « Petit Journal Montparnasse » (2014) and the « New Morning » (2016).



Alexandre Thollon / Harmonica

« Alexandre Thollon might well be the harmonica player of the next millenium » once wrote a journalist for the magazine « Le Kiosque ». Alexander's talent is largely recognised and quite rightly so. He came first in several competitions such as The World Harmonica Festival of Trossingen in Germany and Asia Pacific Harmonica Festival of Atsugi in Japan. This man pushes harmonica playing way beyond its classical boundaries, transcending the blues aspect usually associated with the instrument.

Amongst his main influences, he likes to mention Herbie Hancock, Michael Brecker and most surprisngly, Pablo Casal. His harmonica cries like a cello and shouts like a saxophone... « no messing about, just direct and efficient, Thollon gives everything ! Just listen to his lines and you'll know » (Citizen Jazz magazine).



Francis Arnaud / Drums

The drummer - percussionist Francis Arnaud worked with many different artists and covered many different styles of music such as Pop, Jazz, Salsa, African and World Music. He played amongst others with Franck Mc Comb, Pibo Marquez, Chico Freeman, Roberto Fonseca, Cheik Tidiane Seck, Fawzy Al-Aiedy, the French Jazz greats Eddy Louiss, Thierry Eliez and Jimmy Drouillard but also international stars such as Charles Aznavour and Christopher Cross.

William Lecomte/ Piano

William Lecomte was classically trained and studied harpsichord, piano and harmony at the conservatory of music of Poitiers. He later turned to Jazz and won several competitions for his piano playing and composition skills, winning a French « django d'or » rewarding a first album as well as a nomination at the french « Victoires de la Musique » in 1998. Throughout his career, he mastered many different styles of music and performed with bands and artists, such as : Kirk Whalum, Vaya Con Dios, Nigel Kennedy, Lizzy Ball, Richard Bona, Round About Italy, etc... He has also worked as a musical director for major artists in Germany, Austria, Belgium, and the Middle East. All in all, his name appears in over 70 LP releases worldwide and his musical collaboration with the violonist Jean-Luc Ponty has been going on since 1999, including studio recording and touring worldwide, as part of a duet, quartet, quintet or even featuring a symphonic orchestra...



Léonard Raponi / Double Bass – Bass Guitar

As well as being a composer, producer and arranger, Léonard Raponi has been Gilbert Becaud's bass player and musical director for over 10 years. He's worked with most major French artists among which Charles Aznavour, Céline Dion, Richard Clayderman, Michel Delpech, Annie Cordy and has written music for cinema and television.