
Dr. Damani Phillips

Saxophonist, Recording Artist, Educator

Press Kit



2139 Russell Dr., Iowa City, IA 52240
www.damaniphillips.com



Dr. Damani Phillips

Saxophonist, Recording Artist, Educator, Composer/Arranger



Dr. Damani Phillips is a native of Pontiac, MI, where he began playing at the age of 10. He currently serves as Director of Jazz Studies & Assoc. Professor Af-Am Studies at Univ. of Iowa. He has earned Bachelor and Master of Music degrees from DePaul University and The University of Kentucky in classical saxophone; and a second Master of Music degree Jazz Studies from Wayne State University. In 2009, Phillips completed the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Jazz Studies at the University of Colorado at Boulder; becoming the first African-Americans in the nation to earn this degree.

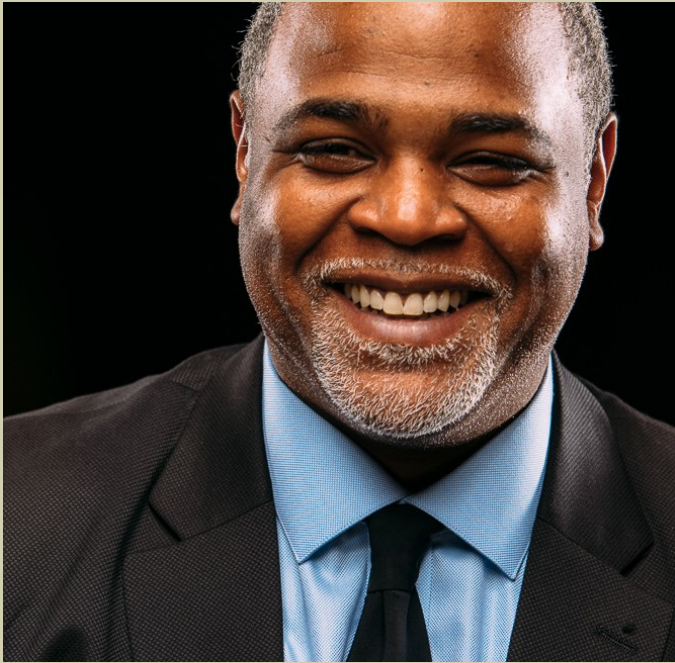
An active performer, pedagogue and composer, Phillips has taught and performed at venues, colleges and universities around the globe. He has performed with artists/groups such

as Christian McBride, Terrell Stafford, Bobby McFerrin, Dianne Reeves, Marcus Belgrave, Wycliffe Gordon, Terrell Stafford, Maceo Parker, Ira Sullivan, The Temptations, Red Holloway, Hank Jones and Lewis Nash among many others.

As a recording artist, Phillips has released 6 jazz albums as a leader, and appeared on over 10 albums as a sideman in genres ranging from pop to contemporary R&B. His recorded output is wide-ranging in its stylistic explorations. Be it the hard driving straight-ahead sounds of “The Reckoning”, the finesse of adding strings on “The String Theory” or his foray into the hip hop realm on “Duality” - Phillips is unafraid to openly explore the musical path that feels best at any given time.



A musician as diverse as his personal background, Phillips is an artist of many dimensions. With roots firmly in the tradition of hard bop while still keeping a close ear on modern innovations, his music is best described as a blend of the soulfulness of Cannonball Adderley with the harmonic savvy of Kenny Garrett. His aspirations as a saxophonist and composer are clear: to strike a soulful balance between jazz tradition and contemporary innovation, and to make music that speaks to ALL people on a wavelength that they can appreciate—regardless of their walk of life. Phillips plays with a fire that is both infectious and unwavering. **Better yet, take a close listen and see for yourself!** Phillips is a Yamaha performing artist.



Photos by Thomas MacIntosh of Urban.Hues.Imagery

Press and Reviews

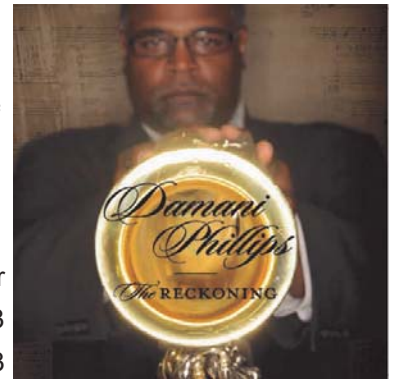
..[the term reckoning] suggests calculation underpinned by trust—whether in others, oneself, or a Higher Power. All these meanings suffuse Phillips' new release, by his own account a leap of faith and in several ways something of a departure for him. Phillips says he came to the realization that he needed to trust his instincts, embrace change, and follow his heart. The rewards, as this stellar effort shows, can be well worth the risks.

Victor Varney, *All About Jazz* 2013

Full review at: www.allaboutjazz.com/php/article.php?id=43565#.UZuyQJzwGSo

Throughout “The Reckoning”, musicianship reigns supreme, the quartet complement each other very well creating an enjoyable listening experience.

Arturo Gomez, Program Director, KUVO Jazz 89 Denver
stage.causeroom.com/kuvo/index.php?s=23803
KUVO CD of the Month in January 2013



Ambitiously conceived, superbly arranged, flawlessly executed, this album is what jazz is all about: surprising, exciting, achingly beautiful by turns, and full of stand-out, virtuosic playing. Many instrumentalists can make a shiny, complex solo in the middle of a song. Mr. Phillips goes further. He plays with texture, with rhythm, with seemingly bizarre adventures in timbre and tempo and harmony and melody and makes it all seem sensible, effortless, right. He makes music.

Dan Cohen, *The Muse's Muse*

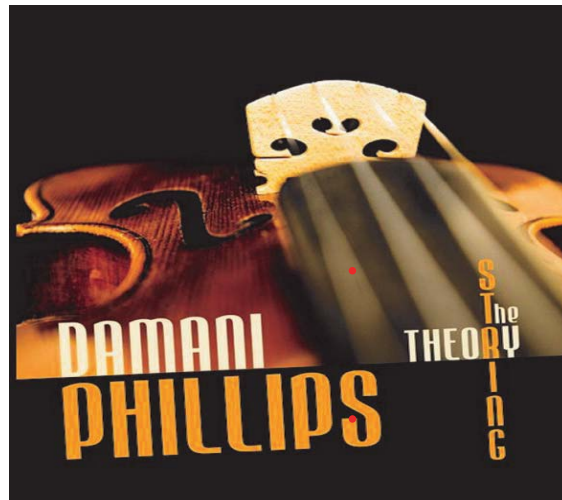
Full review at: www.musesmuse.com/mrev-damaniphillips-thestringtheory.html

Still, there are those who faithfully subscribe to what Sir Duke (Ellington) not only espoused, but lived as core values. One of those faithful is Dr. Damani Phillips, and his newest album, suggestively titled *The String Theory*, is a project that could fundamentally change the modern jazz trajectory, as well as shine a much deserved light on the grand, proud tradition of jazz in the Midwest.... Yet assured and educated the artist may be, it (*The String Theory*) is a visionary leap of faith into the swirling tide of creative daring. And there, between the quite distant shores of classical and jazz, Phillips has raised an island and built a bridge.

Brandon Findlay, *The Des Moines Music Coalition*

Full review at: www.desmoinesmc.com/new-music/894-dr-damani-phillipsqclazzq-is-in-session

The String Theory



The String Theory

Released: November, 2010

Label: Damani Phillips Music
(independent release)

Personnel:

Damani Phillips—saxophones
Ben Markley—Piano
Mark Simon—Bass
Ryan Hayden—Drums
Ross Snyder—Violin 1
Kahyee Lee—Violin 2
Andrew Krimm—Viola
Kimberley Patterson—Cello

Recording Info:

Recorded April 1-2, 2010
Mile High Music Ltd. —Wheat
Ridge, CO
Engineer—Scott Griess

**All compositions composed
and/or arranged by
Damani Phillips**

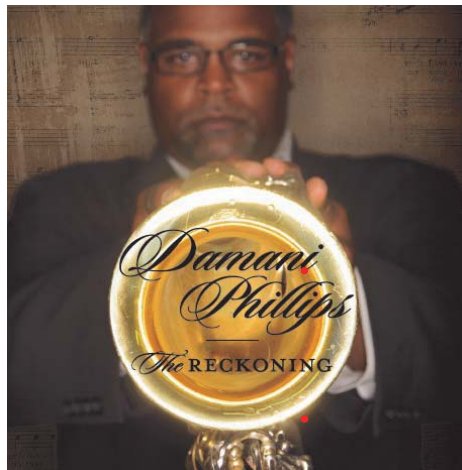
© 2010—Damani Phillips
Music (ASCAP)

In recent years, I have noticed an unrealized opportunity for increased collaboration between the worlds of jazz and classical music. Both styles co-exist with each other, but infrequently have the opportunity or cause to collaborate on a musical level. Part of the reason for this, in my opinion, is a lack of repertoire that requires the talents of musicians from both genres to work together. In an effort to fill this void, I wrote/arranged the music for "The String Theory", which calls for the combined efforts of a traditional jazz rhythm section (piano, bass and drum set) and string quartet. The use of strings in a jazz context is not a new concept; however, few jazz musicians have taken advantage of the veritable bounty of possibilities that collaborations of this nature offer to the jazz composer. The use of strings in this context has, in many ways, become a lost art in the world of jazz composition. As a result, the use of this instrumental configuration is now considered a fresh and creative direction in jazz music. The nature of jazz music in this day and age suggests that success in the genre require that its practitioners aspire to break boundaries and look to branch out in unconventional musical directions. With the music contained on this album, I sought to create a unique and substantive way to facilitate interdisciplinary collaboration, exemplify the potential benefits of such collaboration and produce an artistic product that would be artistically relevant in contemporary music circles.

My musical background is unusually diverse, as I began my career as a classical musician. Just as my musical background is diverse, so is the product that I have created with this project. Despite the popular opinion that jazz and classical music are very different and separate musical styles, this album proves that these two styles of music are alike in many ways, and that the synergy of the two can create a refreshingly unique direction in music. The tracks contained on the album are a mixture of my original compositions, arrangements of jazz standards, and re-harmonized arrangements of recognizable classical pieces.

The music contained on "The String Theory" represents a very unique variant of jazz currently on the market. The music is best described as jazz that is reminiscent of the "with strings" recordings of the 1950's with overt overtones of the contemporary model of jazz harmony, style, and feel. The final product is a unique blend of jazz and classical influences that pays due respect to jazz tradition while looking forward to the future of the music – all of which is achieved in a body of work that resounds with jazz enthusiasts and novice listeners alike. I proudly espouse that there is something for every type of listener on "The String Theory", and it comprises a body of work that is inviting, yet uncompromising, in substance and musical quality.

The Reckoning



The Reckoning

Released: December 2012

Label: Damani Phillips Music

(independent release)

Personnel:

Damani Phillips—Sax, Scat vocals

Greg Gisbert—Trumpet

Pat Bianchi—Hammond B3 Organ

Lewis Nash—Drums

Recording Info:

Recorded April 5-7, 2012

Tedesco Studios—Paramus, NJ

Engineer—Tom Tedesco

Mixed/Mastered at Mile High

Music, Ltd.

Engineer—Scott Griess

**All compositions composed
and/or arranged by
Damani Phillips**

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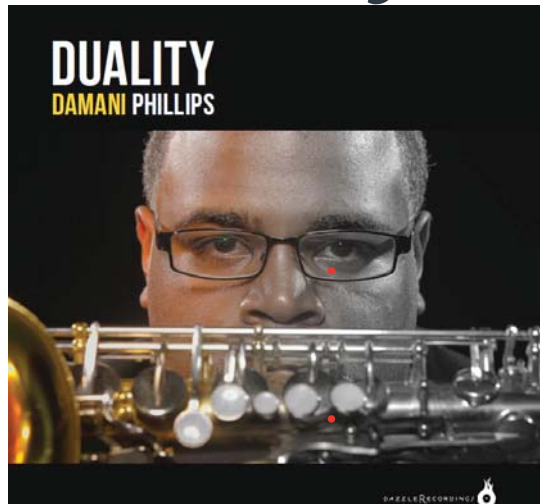
As a player and composer, the past few years of my life have been a period of exceptional growth. Spurred by an extended residency in NYC in 2011, I came to the realization that I needed to re-focus my energy on what matters most to me as a jazz musician—finding my own unique and personal voice as both a player and composer. Specifically, the past two years has been a time of tremendous growth and self-discovery; providing time for me to reconnect with the musical qualities that I so passionately embrace and to pursue a return to the principals of my musical upbringing. The culmination of my recent musical growth and evolving sense of musical purpose is chronicled on this album. “The Reckoning” is the embodiment of my aspiration to become the player and composer that is uniquely Damani Phillips—to find MY voice.

“The Reckoning” is a uniquely varied body of work, consisting of a mixture of original compositions and arrangements of infrequently recorded tunes in the jazz repertoire. As has become the standard for my prior recordings, stylistic variety is ever-present within this collection of songs. While seeking to create music that is inviting to a wide variety of listeners, my hard bop roots are front and center in the flavor and spirit of the album. The original compositions on the album strongly reflect the influence of this period of jazz history on my musicianship, consisting of tunes that are substantive yet relatable to many. The arrangements of pre-existing tunes represent personal favorites from the catalogues of jazz giants Kenny Dorham and Hank Mobley.

In keeping with the edgy, hard-bop spirit of my work, I sought the assistance of the best musicians in New York to help in bringing my music to life. I enlisted the help of NYC jazz standouts Greg Gisbert on trumpet, Hammond B3 Organist Pat Bianchi, and the incomparable Lewis Nash on drums. The caliber of musicians joining me on the album give my music an infectious organic spirit; all while exuding the highest standards of quality and musical substance. “The Reckoning” marks the first time that these three individuals have ever come together to record, yet they play like they’ve been performing together for years! The combined personnel on this album work together to create a recording that is an exceptional listening experience. The album is highly effective in striking a harmonious balance between the old and new while allowing me to stay true to my individual voice as a musician and composer.

It is with great pride and enthusiasm that I present “The Reckoning” to you. God bless, and more importantly, enjoy!

Duality



“Duality”

Release: August 1, 2015

Label: Dazzle Recordings

Personnel

Disk 1: The Jazz Club

Damani Phillips—Saxophones

Mike Jellick—Piano/Rhodes

Takashi Iio—Upright / Ele. Bass

Nate Winn—Drums

Disk 2: Mixtape

CJ Warfield—Keyboards

Greg Squires—Ele. Bass

Cassius Goens—Drums

Guest Artists

Quincy Stewart—Trumpet

Jimmy Smith—Trumpet

MEL (Sixdeepgeneral) - Rap

Dwight Adams—Trumpet

Vincent Chandler—Trombone

If you haven't noticed, the popularity of jazz - particularly amongst young people - has been declining for decades now. Jazz is beautiful and complex music, and I feel fortunate to be able to play it for a living. However, the problem of jazz being perceived as a fringe style that is unwelcoming to "outsiders" is a real concern, and if it is not addressed, we will end up playing ourselves into cultural and artistic irrelevance.

We as practitioners DO have a say in our current dilemma, but we must be willing to make some slight adjustments in how we go about doing things musically if we are going to bring about change. I'm not alone in raising this issue, but this album is the result of my decision to stop just talking about it and try to (in some small way) do something about it.

In thinking of feasible ways to combat the trend stated above, I had the idea of using hip hop as the "bridge" to get young people to give jazz another look. The challenge, of course, is finding a way to balance desires to make the music welcoming to new listeners, while at the same time, upholding standards of musical substance and integrity. So began the idea of *Duality* - a double album which contains one disc of varying flavors of traditional jazz, and a second disc of jazz placed on equal footing with hip hop. The idea is to attract younger/less experienced listeners with the familiar sounds and grooves on the hip hop disc while pairing that music with an album of quality straight-ahead jazz. Coincidentally, that road goes both ways in that the more seasoned listeners that are drawn to the jazz disc will have the opportunity to acquaint themselves to hip hop that's flavored with a musical sensibility that better resonates with their existing musical tastes. The overall goal: to try to get folks excited about jazz again, to show them a potential new direction for the music, and to dispel common myths that quality jazz simply isn't applicable to the sensibilities/tastes of everyday people. "Duality" functions well in striking a balance between appeal and substance.

Disk 1: "The Jazz Club" features a mixture of both original compositions, arrangements and covers of not-so-common jazz tunes. The result is a diverse mixture of flavors that resonates with listeners of all walks of life. The band and guest artists consist of the finest musicians in the Metro-Detroit area!

Disk 2: "Mixtape" is a slick hybrid of hip hop that incorporates bebop vocabulary in a way that embodies jazz tradition without flaunting it. Placing traditional bop on equal footing with hip hop presents the music in a way that is directly connected to straight-ahead jazz, but repackaged to capitalize on a worldwide affinity for hip hop music. The end result is a funky, edgy and urban take on jazz music that vibrates on a uniquely contemporary wavelength. A mix of live band tunes and backing tracks customary in hip hop.

It is with great pride and enthusiasm that I present *Duality* to you. God bless, and more importantly, enjoy!

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(ASCAP)

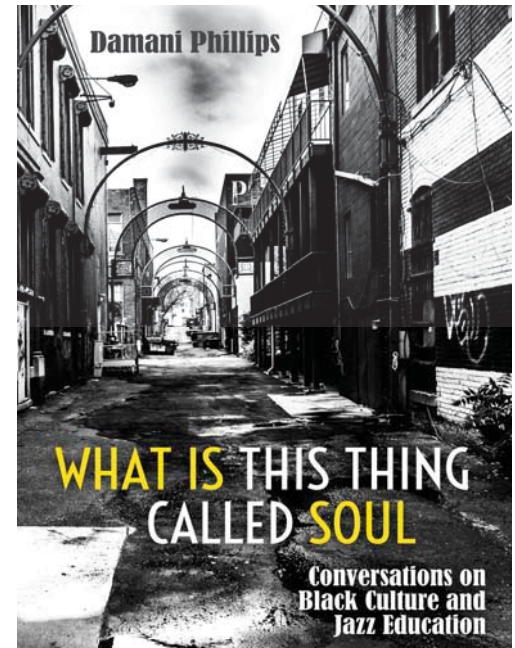
www.damaniphillips.com

www.dazzlerecordings.com

What Is This Thing Called Soul

Conversations on Black Culture and Jazz Education

Damani Phillips



What Is This Thing Called Soul breaks new intellectual ground in openly exploring how academic jazz education impacts the Black cultural value of soulfulness and similar esthetic standards in contemporary jazz music.

Peter Lang Publishing
Black Studies and Critical Thinking Series

ISBN: 978-1-4331-4570-4
240 pages, 9 images
\$52.99 Paperback

Interviews Include:

Stefon Harris
Nicholas Payton
Rufus Reid
Marcus Belgrave
Phil Woods
Wycliffe Gordon

Foreword by
Derrick Gardner
(of Count Basie Orchestra)

DR. DAMANI PHILLIPS is Associate Professor of Jazz and African American Studies at the University of Iowa. An active performer, teacher and scholar; he has performed, taught and lectured at colleges, universities and music venues around the world. He has released 5 albums as a bandleader.



Contact Damani Phillips

Twitter: @lordjaz06
Instagram: @lordjaz1906
Email: lordjaz1906@hotmail.com
www.damaniphillips.com

Through candid conversations with nine of the country's most highly respected jazz practitioners and teachers, **What Is This Thing Called Soul** explores the potential consequences of forcing the Black musical style of jazz into an academic pedagogical system that is specifically designed to facilitate the practice and pedagogy of European classical music. It tests the belief that the cultural, emotional and esthetic elements at the very core of jazz's unique identity, along with the music's overt connection to Black culture, are effectively being "lost in translation" in crossing the divide between academic and non-academic jazz spheres. This work offers a candid and objective look into pressing issues of race, culture and ethnic value in relation to both jazz music and jazz education. Sensitivity, marginalization and even a fear of offending others has limited open discussion of how the soul of jazz music can be lost in technical boundaries. **What Is This Thing Called Soul** is the first attempt to directly address such culturally urgent issues in jazz music. The book includes interviews with the late jazz masters Marcus Belgrave and Phil Woods; both of whom passed away shortly after being interviewed. Interviews are supplemented by original analysis of the nature and validity of these issues contributed by the author. Though Jazz serves as a focal point of the book, it essentially illuminates potential problems with the transmission of any cultural art form of ethnic origins in academic environments. The candid nature of the interviews provide informative and worthwhile read for readers of all backgrounds and interests well beyond jazz music alone.

Available in Paperback, Hardcover and E-book Formats at:

Peter Lang Publishing USA: www.peterlang.com

Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/What-This-Thing-Called-Soul/dp/1433145707>

“Live in Iowa” by P.B.N.G

Live in Iowa

Released: January 2018

Label: Damani Phillips Music

(independent release)

Personnel:

Damani Phillips— Sax, Scat vocals

Greg Gisbert—Trumpet

Pat Bianchi—Hammond B3 Organ

Lewis Nash—Drums

Recording Info:

Recorded March 24-25, 2017 at

The Mill of Iowa City and Noce Jazz

and Cabaret of Des Moines

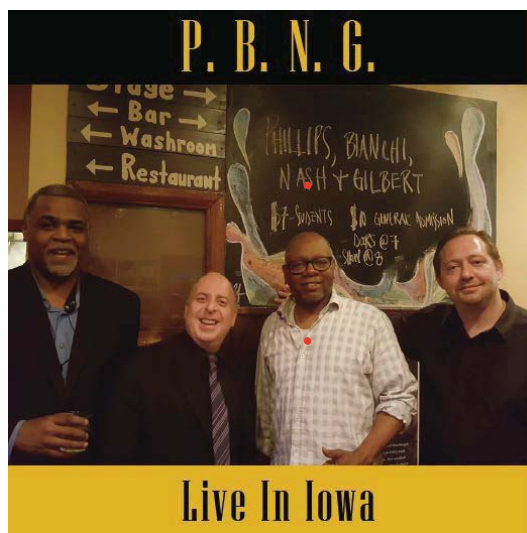
Mixed by Israel Newman

Mastered by Mark Byerley

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In April of 2012, saxophonist Damani Phillips, Hammond organist Pat Bianchi, trumpeter Greg Gisbert and legendary drummer Lewis Nash came together for the very first time to record an album under Phillips’s name titled “The Reckoning”. We were beyond pleased to reunite for 2 great shows in the state of Iowa - the first at The Mill in Iowa City and a second at Noce Jazz and Cabaret in Des Moines. The album you hold in your hands is a live recording consisting of the best of those two nights. The prospect of a live album is not one taken lightly, as the benefits of in-studio recording are unavailable to the musicians in such an environment. No overdubbing solos, no correcting errors in ensemble playing, no pitch correction for those problem moments – essentially no safety net whatsoever to rely on. However, jazz is music that is meant to happen spontaneously in the moment, and is at its very best when existing in the spirit of reciprocal energy between audience and performer. So while the undertaking of a live recording has its share of risks, it also has the potential to reap rewards that can only be captured in live performance. We recorded this album with this hope in mind, and we’ve done our best to deliver a great album that captures that spirit well.

Hailing from NYC/Denver/Phoenix; Bianchi, Gisbert and Nash are each internationally recognized as leaders in jazz on their respective instruments. Together with Phillips (Pontiac, MI), the group creates music that exudes energy and soulfulness; striking an exciting balance between musical substance and accessibility. The album content consists of a balanced mixture of original compositions and existing tunes that are not commonly heard on stage or recordings. The result is a strong collection of work that possesses a little something for everyone to enjoy, and at the same time, gives us musicians the latitude to connect with the listener on a variety of levels.

No More Apologies



No More Apologies

Release November 5, 2021

Label: Openmind Records

Personnel:

Damani Phillips— Sax, Scat vocals

William Menefield—Piano / Rhodes

Brandon Meeks—Bass

Cassius Goens—Drums

Violin

Sylvia de la Cerna,
Lucinda Ali Landing, Edith Yokley,
Zara Zaharleva

Viola

Chuck Bontrager, Adjedmaa Ali

Cello

Tahirah Whittington,
Najette Abouelhadi

Recording Info:

Recorded July 9—12, 2021 at

Soundmine Studios, Chicago, IL

Mixed and Mastered by Steve Capp

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(ASCAP)

Available at

<https://damaniphillips.hearnow.com/>

iTunes / Rhapsody/ / Tidal / YouTube

www.damaniphillips.com

www.soundminestudios.net

No More Apologies represents the realization of a longstanding musical dream that began with the recording of my 2010 album “The String Theory”. The reality of working with strings in a jazz context is that the composer/arranger is limited in the musical directions that can be explored. The classical training typical among string players prepares them to play well in that tradition, but customarily leaves them ill-equipped to address the syncopation essential to jazz and other styles derived from African American music culture. This means that jazz composers must either “write around” these weaknesses or learn to accept poorly-interpreted syncopation. The latter is the epitome of the phrase “fitting a square peg into a round hole,” resulting in music that is rigid, sounds forced and lacks the characteristic *groove* that is ever-present in Black music. What would happen if I could find a string section that could legitimately handle swing? What might be possible with strings that negotiate hip hop and funk syncopation in a natural, unforced way? What if I could find a string section that could be an *active* contributor to a syncopated groove rather than a harmonic layer that floats atop of it? Are these things even possible?! *No More Apologies* provided the chance to get answers to these musical questions that I’ve been asking myself for the past 12 years.

Best described as an album of Black music rather than a “jazz” album in the traditional sense, *No More Apologies* is the result of a risky, yet rewarding, musical experiment. A twist of fate brought me together with a one-of-a-kind string section with a uniquely refined understanding of Black music. Without the need to worry about the rhythmic limitations of a typical string group, the music on this album was allowed to go in whatever direction it needed to go. The end result is a stylistic journey through the swingin’, funky, syncopated side of the musical tracks that is difficult to find duplicated in the jazz world. With the help of a stellar jazz rhythm section, *No More Apologies* is a one of a kind project that embraces the power and reach of music that grooves beautifully. A project of substantial music that grooves hard while remaining down to earth—all the things that great jazz music should strive to be! Kick back, turn up the volume and enjoy the musical ride!

Unlike any other album on the market. Take a listen and see for yourself!