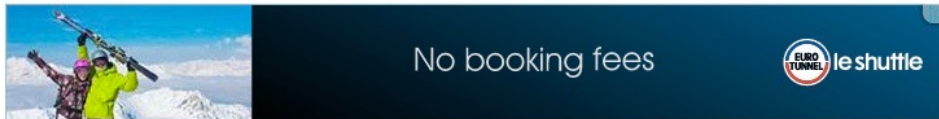


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The Sirkis/Bialas International Quartet: Come To Me (2015)

By **MARK SULLIVAN**, Published: April 6, 2015 | 3,066 views

★★★★★

The The Sirkis/Bialas International Quartet demonstrates how well a vocalist can work as the featured soloist in a quartet. Even better, they make you forget the instrumentation in the beauty and joy of the music they make. The group truly deserves the "International" part of their name. Drummer [Asaf Sirkis](#) is an Israeli living in England; vocalist [Sylwia Bialas](#) is a Pole living in Germany; keyboardist [Frank Harrison](#) is English; and bassist [Patrick Bettison](#) is from the United States.



The music they make collectively could come from anywhere and everywhere. Co-leaders Sirkis and Bialas composed all of the music (each is responsible for half of the tunes), with Bialas taking credit for all of the lyrics (also half of the tracks). Since the lyrics are in Polish, for many listeners there won't be much difference between the songs with lyrics and the vocalise. But the lyrics do seem to have an effect on the melodies, and Bialas' delivery. The liner notes include English translations.

"Vortex" is the first of the up-tempo Latin tunes, a sound which evokes the first version of Chick Corea's *Return to Forever*—this is where Bialas' performance recalls *Flora Purim*. That sound recurs again on "Magnolia." But they're attractive tracks, which do not sound at all derivative. Bettison's chromatic harmonica playing is far from a gimmick, adding an interesting texture to the group sound. He plays the instrument on four of the ten tracks, but is especially featured on the opening of "Mandragora," which begins with a piano/harmonica duet.

Bialas commands a wide range of vocal styles, from the overtone singing on the title track (which is used for texture, rather than the main voice); to the atmospheric, ECM-like sound on many tracks (think *Norma Winstone*); to the more horn-like sound on the up-tempo tracks (reminiscent of *Flora Purim*). On "Orgon" she even pulls out some spacey extended vocal effects.

Sirkis is known for his work with the Lighthouse trio, [Tim Garland](#), [Larry Coryell](#), [John Abercrombie](#), and his own trio. His playing here is consistently energetic and creative. Despite being co-leader, his solo time is minimal. He makes his contribution as composer as much as drummer. That approach describes the whole project: group rather than individual, with the overall sound as the star.

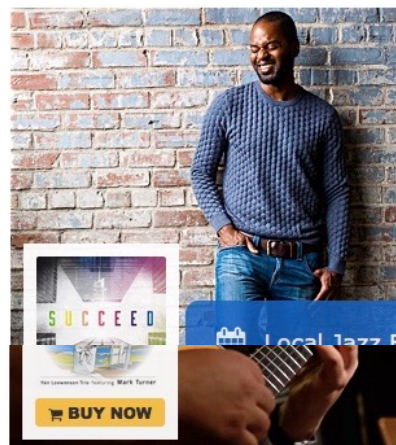
Track Listing: Come To Me; Dreams Dreams; Vortex; Ismael; A Hymn; Mandragora; The One; Magnolia; Orbs; Orgon

Personnel: Asaf Sirkis: drums; Sylwia Bialas: vocals, overtone singing; Frank Harrison: piano, keyboards; Patrick Bettison: bass guitar, chromatic harmonica.

Record Label: Stonedbird Productions

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