

IQ

SIRKIS/BIALAS



Sirkis/Bialas IQ

EMOTIONAL
GROOVY
DYNAMIC
MULTICULTURAL

Asaf Sirkis	<i>drums / konnakol / compositions</i>
Sylwia Bialas	<i>vocals / waterphone / compositions</i>
Frank Harrison	<i>piano, keyboards</i>
Kevin Glasgow	<i>electric bass</i>

The Sirkis/Bialas International Quartet is a collaboration between Israeli UK-resident drummer/composer **Asaf Sirkis**, known for his work with the Lighthouse trio (ACT), Nguyen Le, John Taylor, Kenny Wheeler, Gwilym Simcock, Gilad Atzmon, Tim Garland, Larry Corryel, John Abercrombie, Jacob Collier & The Asaf Sirkis Trio, and Polish vocalist/composer extraordinaire **Sylwia Bialas**.

The quartet features London based, scottish bassist **Kevin Glasgow**, and the acclaimed **Frank Harrison** on piano and keyboards (UK).

With an emphasis on band interaction and sheer joy of playing, this band celebrates music from both collaborators, covering a wide range of influences such as contemporary classical music, Polish folk, South Indian & Middle Eastern musics as well as a wide range of dynamics – from the most delicate ballad all the way to high-energy electric virtuoso lines and everything in between. Expect soulful melodies, aerospheric sounds with strong grooves, a full colour electroacoustic jazz with an ethnic touch and some uncommonly used instruments and sound effects.

The bands first album - COME TO ME - was launched at the London Jazz Festival in 2015 and got to be one of the best releases of that year at [All About Jazz website](#) as well as receiving other rave reviews.

The Sirkis/Bialas IQ are currently producing a new double album called - OUR NEW EARTH - which will be released in 2019 on the NYC record label Moonjune

[Click here](#) to listen to the band's debut album `Come To Me`

Photos by Gary Corbett

Press Highlights

Sirkis/Bialas IQ

Album `Come To Me`

„The album consists of ten journeys, they are much more than tracks, which contain many moments of intense yearning, sorrow, happiness and love.“

„The music is highly emotional, with long-limbed melodies that unfold slowly, encircling the sound stage. Time stops for the duration as the music uncovers multiple layers of meaning“

„The Sirkis/Bialas International Quartet has a sound all its own, despite having influences from all over the world. This sound is one of beauty, love and hope...“

Budd Kopman, All About Jazz (USA) ***** [read more](#)

„Come To Me, is a true tour-de-force of musicianship and innovation.“

„...this is what music is all about: colorful, infinitely creative, and full of heartfelt, emotional intensity. Each musician is such a talent unto themselves that when playing together you cannot help but feel completely transported to a better place while you listen.“

„This album is truly magnificent! ...a musical experience without peer!“

„COME TO ME" IS A MASTERPIECE!“

John Prichard, Jazz-Rock.com (USA) ***** [read more](#)

„Come To Me is more than merely a fine vocal jazz album, since like other singers such as Norma Winstone, Bialas uses her voice as an instrument and not just as a means of expressing lyrics, whilst her colleagues provide sumptuously arranged and executed music.“

Roger Farbey, All About Jazz (UK) **** [read more](#)

„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.“

Mark Sullivan, All about Jazz website (USA) **** [read more](#)

„Come To Me includes excellent compositions and superb performances, turning the entire listening experience into a most pleasing aesthetic adventure.“

„...Intelligent, emotional, moving music of this magnitude is rare in today's chilling reality of non-culture and gems like this one should be embraced and admired...“

„The entire quartet seems to act as a symbiotic organism, in complete contrast to the usual singer/band circumstances.“

Adam Baruch, Jazzis Records (ISR) [read more](#)

„THE INVITATION to share in the rarefied, positive atmospheres contained within this debut release from the Sirkis Bialas International Quartet is tangible from an ensemble who evidently love what they create together.

„... this is no 'singer plus band' set-up, but rather a fully integrated quartet whose conception feels unique.“

„`Come To Me is an outstanding album by all means and hopefully many people around the world will be eventually exposed to it.“

Adrian Palant, AP Reviews (UK) [read more](#)

„Come To Me is a gentle, sometimes dreamy, poetic album where the empathetic relationship between the players is a critical and a very evident factor in its success.“

Ian Maund, sandybrownjazz (UK)

„Come To Me is a rich, melodic jazz/world fusion. All four musicians are eloquent melodists, and the soundscape is warm and wide.

The fact that Bialas sings the lyrics in Polish makes all the vocals more like pure music for us non-Polish speakers and that adds an attractive lack of specificity to the music.“

Peter Bacon, The jazzbreakfast (UK) [read more](#)

„The debut album of the Sirkis/Bialas International Quartet captivates almost from the first tones with it`s genuine freshness, created by the four musicians drawing their joy and inspiration from each tone shared among each other. The delicate, pulsating and melodically rich soundscapes from the verge of Jazz, World Music and Progressive Rock, enchant the listener with their wide range of moods and high-class musicality, sensitivity and the brilliance of each of the four musicians.“

Tomasz Furmanek, Jazz Forum Magazine, Nowy Czas polish magazine (UK/POL) [read more](#)

Reviews in other Languages: [Poland](#), [Belgium](#), [Spain](#), [Italy](#), [Russia](#), [Greece](#), [Germany](#)



Asaf Sirkis (Israel/UK) *drums, composition*

"Since arriving in London from Israel at the end of the '90s, Asaf Sirkis has earned a reputation as one of the world's premier drummers" Ian Patterson, All About Jazz

"Sirkis' drumming is very subtle and razor sharp throughout, even when the energy rises" Budd Kopman All About Jazz

"Asaf Sirkis sounding creatively freer and more dramatically inventive than ever on drums" John Fordham, The Guardian

Born in Israel, 1969, Asaf started his professional career as a musician in the early 90's playing with many different Jazz-Rock, Kleizmer, world music, and Free Jazz bands in Israel. During that time he co-operated with Israel's local Jazz/world luminaries such as Harold Rubin, Albert Beger, Yair Djal and Eyal Sela. Many of those early projects were recorded and released by a pioneer Jazz record label in Israel called Jazzis (founded by Adam Baruch). Around those years Asaf started to write music but it wasn't until 1995 when he formed his first trio that he found an outlet for his writing. In 1998 Asaf left Israel and settled in London. He soon became part of the UK Jazz and world music scene, and started working with artists such as Adel Salameh, a Palestinian oud player/composer and reeds player Gilad Atzmon with whom he formed the 'Orent House Ensemble'. In 1999 Asaf formed his band 'Inner Noise' with Steve Lodder (Church Org.) and Mike Outram (Guit). In 2003 Asaf recorded the Inner Noise' first album ('Inner Noise'). 'Inner Noise' is widely considered a groundbreaking album and the music has been described as a new genre - 'Gothic Jazz'. The CD was chosen as one of the best albums of 2005 at the CHUOFM89 radio jazz station in Canada. In 2006 Asaf started a unique collaboration with highly acclaimed saxophonist/composer Tim Garland and Pianist Gwilym Simcock known as the 'Lighthouse trio' (ACT). This band has toured world-wide and recorded 3 albums so far. With his Inner Noise band Asaf made two more albums, 'We Are Falling' (Konnex 2005) and 'The Song Within' (SAM Productions/Egea 2007) which was selected as one of the best albums of 2007 at the 'All About Jazz' web-site by John Kelman. While developing his own compositions, Asaf formed the Asaf Sirkis Trio in 2007 which features Greek guitarist Tassos Spiliotopoulos and Israeli bassist Yaron Stavi. This trio released their first album 'The Monk' in September, 2008 (SAM Productions/Egea) and is currently preparing a new release - 'Letting Go' - in September 2010. Asaf is also working with the Larry Coryell's 'Power Trio' (featuring Larry Coryell on Guitar and Jeff Berlin on Bass), Nicolas Meier Group (guitarist off Jeff Beck's band), a group that combines Jazz with Middle Eastern music, with John Law's Art Of Sound Trio as well as working with other artists such as: Chick Corea, Jeff Berlin, John Abercrombie, Soft Machine, Bob Sheppard, Norman Watt-Roy (off the Blockheads), Wilko Johnson, Mark Egan, Dave Liebman, David Binney, Gary Husband, John Taylor, Norma Winstone, Kenny Wheeler, Gwilym Simcock, Andy Sheppard, Soft Machine, Peter King, John Etheridge and more.

[Photo Thieme - Markendesign](#)



Sylwia Bialas (Poland/UK)

voice, composition

„Bialas voice is not only exceptional, both in timbre and range, but her improvisations are stunning. She uses her voice like an instrument, wordless, powerful, soaring...” **Free Jazz Album Reviews, Los Angeles, Fusion, World Jazz (USA)**

„Her voice is an astounding instrument, crystal clear throughout its wide range, with a very sparing use of a tight, controlled vibrato. She can whisper as easily as soar, and Polish never sounded so enchanting.” **Budd Koppman, All About Jazz (USA)**

„Bialas balances wisely and beautifully between singing lyrics and using her voice as an instrument, improvising scat and vocalese passages. As a result this album immediately arises to the level of one of the best vocal achievements I had the pleasure to hear this year.” **Adam Baruch, Jazzis Records (ISR)**

„Sylwia Bialas uses her voice either to shape her self-penned native lyrics or to explore more and more inventive instrumental avenues, frequently taking it through seemingly unreachable pitches and athletic rhythmic patterns. And the distinction here is the constant interaction with her fellow players; this is no 'singer plus band' set-up, but rather a fully integrated quartet whose conception feels unique.” **Adrian Palant, AP Reviews (UK)**

„Bialas is not just another great jazz vocalist improvising her way through a cool sounding acoustic album. Her voice shimmers, sparkles and whispers like a misty morning sun shining through to warm our heart and soul. I found myself soaring on each and every note and was deeply moved by her soulfulness. **John Prichard, Jazz-Rock.com website (UK)**

„There`s an almost devotional intensity to her singing that rarely fails to deliver” **Andy Robson, Jazzwise (UK)**

Bialas` flexible, changeable timbre and the instrumental approach to improvisation turns her voice into an adaptable, interactive and unique musical instrument. Her way of phrasing is very peculiar in both: soulful sung lyrics and the picturesque vocalises. Sylwia Bialas` music is essentially touched by styles like ECM and ethno. The strong influence of the eastern culture is indispensably audible in her way of musical expression. „Music is my precious way of sharing, with both the musicians I`m honoured and happy to work with and with the audience...”

Till now she cooperated with artists like Andrea Centazzo (It/USA), Asaf Sirkis (Isr/UK), Peter Phippen (USA), Hans-Peter Salentin (Ger), Michael Wollny (Ger), Adrian Mears (Austral.), Tim Garland (UK), "The shin" (Georgia), Hubert Winter (Ger), Frank Harrison (UK), Antonio Zambrini (It), Russ Spiegel (USA), Roine Sangerberg (Swe), Jesper Bodilsen (Den), Michele Salgarello (It), Gilad Atzmon (UK), Pat Bettison (USA), Yaron Stavi (ISR), Zbigniew Lewandowski (Pol), and many other great musical personalities. **Sylwia Bialas** was a member and initiator of various International Music & Art projects as well as the diverse bands touring in Germany, Poland Italy, Scandinavia & UK. Her recent collaborations/bands: Sirkis/Bialas International Quartet, Sylwia Bialas Quartet, CEA Ensemble (Scandinavia/Italy/Germany), Deep Endeavour (scandinavian art project). Sylwia Bialas did recordings for the soundtracks: "Krabat", 20th Century Fox, "Paradies auf Erden" for the German Art TV channel.

Photo by Gary Corbett



Frank Harrison (UK) *piano, keyboards*

„Cranium-shattering levels of intensity“
The Guardian

„The most elliptical, preoccupied overtures develop unexpected fireworks“
The Guardian

„Lucid, intelligent, spacious and beautifully controlled explorations“
Jazzwise

„As delicate and expressive as anything else I've heard ... Simply beautiful“
Northern Echo

„Frank Harrison is one of the UK's unique pianistic voices“
John Stevenson, EJazzNews

„The less he plays the more his spezial voice glows through.“
Jazzwise

Frank Harrison took up the piano at 11, and began playing gigs when he was 15. After taking up a scholarship at Berklee School Of Music, Boston, he returned to the UK and joined Gilad Atzmon's band. In 2000 they started the Orient House Ensemble, with whom Frank has recorded seven albums, including BBC Jazz Album Of The Year 2003, Exile. The band regularly tours Europe, playing at major Jazz and World music festivals. Frank has also performed with Peter King, Julian Arguelles, Julian Siegel, Don Weller, Alan Barnes, John Etheridge, Louis Stewart and Iain Ballamy. In 2006 Frank formed a trio with drummer Stephen Keogh and bassist Aidan O'Donnell. Their debut album, First Light, launched to critical acclaim and they have since toured regularly in Europe and the Far East, as well as collaborating with special guests such as Louis Stewart and Tina May. Frank's new trio features Davide Petrocca on bass and Stephen Keogh on drums.

„It is such a huge pleasure to experience the goosebump-effect each single time Frank touches the Keys to play a ballad. His way of phrasing and fine sound remind how precious, intense and powerful is the language of silence and space in music...“ **Asaf Sirkis & Sylwia Bialas**

[Photo Tali Atzmon](#)



Kevin Glasgow (Scotland, UK)

electric bass

Was born in Inverness in 1983 to musical parents Dick and Sabine. When he was 9 years old the family moved to Northern Ireland, where he started learning guitar and playing traditional Irish music sessions with his parents.

At the age of 16 Kevin began playing bass guitar and later moved back to Scotland to study Popular Music at Napier University in Edinburgh. Whilst there he played regularly on the Edinburgh jazz circuit. Since graduating, he has played internationally at venues such as Ronnie Scott's, the 606, the Queen Elizabeth Hall, Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola (Lincoln Center NYC) and festivals such as Glastonbury, Xerox Rochester International, Edmonton International Jazz Festival Jazz Festival, Edinburgh Jazz & Blues Festival, the Isle of White Jazz Festival, the Glasgow International Jazz & Blues Festival, and the London Jazz Festival.

He has performed with Tommy Smith, Tony Monaco, Clark Tracey, Joe Locke, Asaf Sirkis, Gareth Lockrane, and the Scottish National Jazz

Orchestra (featuring soloists such as John Scofield, Bill Evans, Randy Brecker, Peter Erskine and Julian Joseph). Kevin has also performed on BBC Radio Scotland and BBC Radio 3. In 2008 Kevin moved to London where he now resides. He currently plays bass and guitar in a number of projects, including Tommy Smith's 'Karma', the Seb Pipe's Life Experience, the Nicolas Meier Trio, and the Asaf Sirkis trio.

[Photo Gary Corbett](#)

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Sirkis/Bialas International Quartet At Duncairn Arts Centre



By **IAN PATTERSON**

April 4, 2018

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Sirkis/Bialas International Quartet

Duncairn Arts Centre

[Belfast](#), N. Ireland

March 22, 2018

Coming so soon after Belfast's annual jazz festival, [Brilliant Corners](#), the appearance of Sirkis/Bialas IQ at Duncairn Arts Centre was a real treat for jazz fans. Better still, the concert was free, sponsored as it was by the Institute for Conflict Research. Since 1996 the non-profit ICR, which is based in Belfast, has worked with community groups in a host of ways to promote good relations between N. Ireland's politically and socially divided communities. Combatting racism and sectarianism and encouraging social inclusion is what the ICR is all about and music—as it proves time and time again—is as good a tool as any to bring people harmoniously together.

The Sirkis/Bialas IQ came together in 2014. A compositional and improvisational vehicle for [Asaf Sirkis](#) and [Sylvia Bialas](#), its debut, *Come to Me* (Stonebird Productions, 2015), was well received by international media. Its music is strongly rooted in jazz, but as this concert demonstrated, Sirkis and Bialas draw inspiration from a broad range of folkloric traditions. In the main, the concert showcased new material from the quartet's as yet to be released album, *Our New Earth*.

The bar was set high from the opener, "Message from the Bluebird"; bookended by Bialas' soaring wordless vocals, this elegiac composition was an early introduction to the quartet's striking melodic and rhythmic chemistry, with pianist [Frank Harrison](#)'s circling motif and [Kevin Glasgow](#)'s bass pulse underpinning Sirkis' animated kit work. One of the great modern drummers, Sirkis' fiery unaccompanied intro to "Reminiscence" bristled with energy and percussive intensity, setting the tone for a brisk quartet workout, with Bialas—like [Norma Winstone](#) and [Lauren Kinsella](#)—employing her voice fearlessly as another instrument.

A brief poem from Bialas was a fitting intro to a beautifully lyrical slower tune built around her Polish-sung lyrics and with caressing contributions from Glasgow and Harrison. Harrison's association with Sirkis goes back almost two decades, notably in [Gilad Atzmon](#)'s Orient House Ensemble, and the musical spark between them was pronounced. Whether on acoustic or electric keys—as on "Spooky Action at a Distance"—Harrison's comping was uplifting and his soloing, particularly on the emotive, church-organ-influenced "Letter to A," was thrilling.

The church organ was a formative influence on Sirkis as a child growing up in Israel and it's a sound he has embraced—via Olivier Messiaen's organ works—to original and foreboding effect with The Inner Noise on albums such as *We Are Falling* (Konnex Records, 2006). In the context of Sirkis/Bialas IQ, however, Harrison's organ tone is more subtly bluesy and hymnal than the doomy, gothic-sounding organ sound of [Steve Lodder](#) in The Inner Noise.

Poetry and balladry fused in Bialas' lovely "Chiaroscuro." Here, the singers' aching, blues-tinged vocals were lent sympathetic support by Sirkis on brushes, while Harrison's beautifully weighted acoustic solo provided a set highlight. The quartet upped the tempo and intensity on another noteworthy Bialas composition "Pegasus," with the singer giving full rein to her powerful voice; a thunderous rhythmic barrage, driven by Sirkis, made for a dramatic finale.

The climax of the concert came with twenty-minute epic "The Earth Suite," which began with tanpura drone—courtesy of Sirkis' mobile phone—and soaring vocal. Following an extended collective passage, punctuated by fine solos from Glasgow and Harrison, the Indian classical influence resurfaced as Sirkis gave an impressive exhibition of konnakol—the Carnatic vocal percussion technique that he's been studying for the past decade. Singer and drummer improvised together briefly before the composition concluded with church organ solemnity.

On the evidence of this concert the upcoming second album from Sirkis/Bialas IQ should help further establish the quartet as one of the most interesting of contemporary jazz ensembles. With music this uplifting, so sensitively and passionately rendered, it's hard not to be seduced.

Photo Credit: Courtesy of [Mariusz Smiejek](#)

