PRESS RELEASE

**Tessa Souter releases new album, *Picture in Black and White*, inspired by her discovery at age 28 that her birth father was black**

**Band: Yotam Silberstein (guitar), Yasushi Nakamura (bass), Keita Ogawa (percussion), Adam Platt (piano), Dana Leong (cello), Billy Drummond (cymbals and drums)**

**Label** NOA Records

**Genre** Jazz, World, Folk, Vocals

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**High resolution cover art/photographs** http://tessasouter.com/hi-res-pictures/

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“Exploring her mixed heritage, the expat with a penchant for Wayne Shorter raises songs to the level of poetry.” **Clive Davis, *TOP TEN JAZZ RECORD OF THE YEAR*, London Sunday Times magazine**

“… a masterpiece, both musically and technically**.” Tony Andrews, HiFi Answers**

“A masterpiece.” **Jack Garner, Rochester Democrat and Chronicle**

“Souter’s expressive warmth, impassioned eloquence and unfailingly beautiful timbre are an ever-present backdrop to this singularly powerful collection . . . [it is] impossible not to be transfixed by the inventiveness and potency of Souter’s artistry.” **4 out of 4 stars, Peter Quinn, Jazzwise magazine**

“Rarely do vocal CDs leave such a strong impact after a single hearing. This is an easy choice for Top Vocal Jazz CD of 2018.” **Ken Dryden, New York Jazz Record**

“A remarkable journey to the interior of the human heart.” **Victor L. Schermer, AllAboutJazz**

“Top Vocal Jazz CD of 2018.” **W Royal Stokes, NPR Critics Poll**

“A beautiful, spiritual album. . . *Picture in Black and White* feels like the kind of journey saxophonist Wayne Shorter has taken us on with albums such as *JuJu* and *The Soothsayer.*” **Marc Myers, JazzWax**

“The truth may not set you free, but it can create beautiful, tragic magic.”***BEST VOCAL DISC OF 2018*,  Jay Hunter. WVCR 88.8 FM**

“She has distinguished herself a jazz pioneer exploring the nether corners of the genre, often smashing preconceptions and expectations on recordings . . .  one of the most inventive musicians singing. Bravo!” **Michael C. Bailey, AllAboutJazz**

**More reviews** [**http://tessasouter.com/picture-in-black-and-white-reviews/**](http://tessasouter.com/picture-in-black-and-white-reviews/)

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***Picture in Black and White,* a meditation on roots and identity, traces Tessa’s “musical DNA” from Africa to the Caribbean, Celtic Britain and Andalusian Spain – a journey through a world of exotic sounds and unusual meters, mythic characters and ancestral ghosts**

 A protégé of jazz vocal legend Mark Murphy, who called her a “true musician,”  “very moving” and “an extraordinary talent,” Souter has established herself as an uncommonly creative vocalist and songwriter over the past two decades. She has made five critically-acclaimed albums, *Listen Love*  (Nara, 2004), *Nights of Key Largo* (Venus, 2008), which was awarded *Swing Journal’s* prestigious **Gold Disc Award**, *Obsession* (Motéma, 2009) and *Beyond the Blue* (Venus-Motéma, 2013) – a UK *Sunday Times* magazine **Top Ten Jazz CD of the Year**, which set her own “exhilaratingly mature lyrics” (Neil Tesser, *Chicago Examiner*) to favorite classical melodies.

Utilizing the talents of some of New York's finest first-call musicians*,* her fifth album, *Picture in Black and White*(Noa) – the second of her albums to be chosen as a *Sunday Times* **Top Ten Jazz Record of the Year** – is a riveting musical journey inspired by her discovery at age 28 that her estranged birth father was Trinidadian and black, having been brought up to believe he was Spanish and white.

Utilizing a mixture of originals and familiar non-standards, including Wayne Shorter's 'Ana Maria' (with Tessa's lyrics, ​for which he granted her shared writing credit), Ornette Coleman's 'Lonely Woman' and Milton Nascimento's 'Nothing Will Be As It Was', it is an emotionally resonant invitation through music to reflect on the African diaspora experience of slavery, loss, love, redemption and the pellucid and lasting repercussions of that period in history.

“Growing up white, you don't just wake up the next day black," says Tessa. "I had no direct connection to it, so I was voraciously reading novels, slave memoirs and history books to really dig in to my heritage. A few years ago, I started hearing familiar songs through that prism, and the idea for the album was born.” ­­

So 'A Taste of Honey' becomes a song about being stolen from Africa and the people left behind. 'Lonely Woman' is for the husbands and wives who were separated throughout slavery due to a lost bet, bankruptcy or just plain cruelty. 'Nothing Will Be As It Was' is about the Reconstruction and that period of freedom and hope. “The lyrics are unchanged,” says Tessa. “I’m just feeling them differently.”

“The themes – love, loss, freedom, even family secrets – are universal,” says Tessa. “It’s rare to grow up white and then find out as an adult that you are black, but when I tell the story on gigs, people come up and tell me their own hidden narratives – a blurred Jewish heritage or a divorced grandfather they were told was dead to cover up the shame of divorce.”

As geneticist Professor David Altshuler writes, in his foreword to Henry Louis Gates’ Finding Your Roots. “Few questions are as universal as where did I come from? We ask because ancestors are family, even if we didn’t have a chance to know them.” 󠄀◙