

Songs of Rebirth



NANCY HARMS | JEREMY SISKIND | LUCAS PINO



Songs Of Rebirth
New Meditations On Rebirth, Reawakening & Evolution
From The Trio of Pianist Jeremy Siskind,
Vocalist Nancy Harms & Saxophonist Lucas Pino

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It's no secret that 2020, and much of 2021, were years of tearing down. So much of our normal lives, routines, careers, and relationships crumbled. The pandemic basically shook, and sometimes destroyed, the foundations on which our lives were built. As depressing as all that may be, the years ahead present an unparalleled opportunity for rebuilding and for rebirth. "We will get to decide how to emerge from the rubble and what kinds of new structures we will erect," says Siskind. "Like so many others, my personal life went through a massive upheaval during the pandemic. When my long-term relationship ended, I 'started over' in a new home and new city and with the challenge of re-envisioning my identity from scratch. It felt threatening but also deeply hopeful. It's been hard but also energizing."

Enter ***Songs Of Rebirth***, pianist Jeremy Siskind's new recording (dropping April 22 on Outside In Music) **with his long-standing trio, The Housewarming Project, featuring vocalist Nancy Harms and saxophonist Lucas Pino.** The recording consists of meditations on the questions of rebirth, reawakening, and evolution, and representations of stories of rebirth in art, science, philosophy, psychology, and culture. **The Housewarming Project was a 2020 recipient of a New Jazz Works grant from Chamber Music America**, a competitive program that selects about fifteen ensembles per year for support through a blind panel. The grant supports the creation of new works by professional U.S.-based composer-led jazz ensembles and helps assure that these compositions will be heard through live performances and recordings.

The double-disc set offers two distinct themes. **Disc one, "True Believers," presents successful rebirthings where a character reemerges meaningfully transformed. On disc two, "Cynics and Snags," the characters struggle or fail at their attempts to remake themselves.** "As the 'comic relief,' I've interwoven verses from an vaudeville-esque song I wrote called 'I'd Break Quarantine for You' throughout the two discs. Each verse is set in a different music style with the hopes of delighting the listener and cleansing their palette between more serious pieces," explains Siskind.

For Siskind, it has been rewarding to witness both members of his ensemble being "reborn" in their own ways during the recording process. During the pandemic, Nancy Harms became a serious painter and is responsible for the album's beautiful artwork. And Lucas became a father! Bryna Gardenia Pino was born in August of 2021. "As for me, among other transformations, I started writing and self-publishing books. [Siskind's book *Playing Solo Jazz Piano*, featuring an introduction by Fred Hersch, has remained one of Amazon's best-selling jazz books for well over a year] I decided that it would be appropriate to present this music in book form as well," says Siskind. *Songs of Rebirth: Scores, Leadsheets, and Transcriptions from the Album* is available to purchase along with the double album on his website."

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Highlights on ***Songs of Rebirth*** include the track "**Serotiny.**" Originally entitled "Fire," this song is about serotinous plants which re-seed forests after a fire. Siskind elaborates, "These plants release their seeds only in extreme heat, usually when a fire is burning. I learned about these plants from a podcast featuring poet-activist Terry Tempest Williams. Remarkably, serotinous plants are often *already* revegetating the land by the time a fire is finished burning. What a beautiful metaphor for a reawakening! I wrote this

composition in September, 2021, when southern California was enveloped in smoke and I was stuck inside, surrounded by the alien light of a blood red sun. As much as the piece is about the hope of rebirth, it's also meant to be an elegy for the American West."

"**Kneel**" is the only song on the album that wasn't written during the pandemic. The trio has performed it for almost ten years, but it's never been properly recorded. It matches the theme of the album beautifully as it speaks about the power and possibility of spiritual renewal. Siskind comments, "Derek Walcott's biography, *Another Life*, inspired this lyric. Walcott, a St. Lucian poet, writes about a moment in which he simultaneously comprehends the beauty of his home in the Caribbean and the suffering and poverty of its inhabitants. Trying to hold these two ideas together in his mind overwhelms him and he falls to his knees in conscious or unconscious prayer. He has no choice but to submit to some sort of higher authority when faced with the question of how so much beauty and so much suffering can coexist."

The titular phrase of "**So I Went to New York City to Be Born Again**" is taken from a passage from Kurt Vonnegut's novel *Bluebeard*. "Regardless of the specifics of the novel, there's something about picking up and moving to New York that feels like a vital human experience. Everybody in my trio has done it at some point. There's a faith in moving to New York which reflects a dedication to pursuing something important, something big, something pure," says Siskind.

Edna St. Vincent Millay wrote a brilliant poem called "Spring" that "**April, the Liar**" captures through music. Siskind explains that, "Millay destroys the poetic trope of spring bringing rebirth each year. Instead, she asserts that although 'it is apparent that there is no death,' 'underground are the brains of men being eaten by maggots' and 'April comes like an idiot, babbling and strewing flowers.' Ah! Time isn't cyclical, it's linear! The poets are duping us! I loved this idea and also loved making Nancy sing the lyric, 'we're all gonna die.'"

Siskind composed "**Forgiveness**" because he wanted to include something that resembled the version of "Whispering Grass" that this trio performed on the album, *Housewarming* (2015, Brooklyn Jazz Underground Records). On this piece, the bass clarinet takes on the role of bass and frees up the piano to play in the upper register. "Poor Lucas was really out of breath by the time the track was done. There's not much time to breath while playing this part. The interlude is interesting from an arranging perspective. I wanted the voice to be the middle part between two piano notes, so my chords surround Nancy as she sings her line. It's quite hard to execute pianistically and vocally! 'Forgiveness' can often represent the rebirth of a relationship. I was inspired to write the song after listening to psychologist Harriet Lerner talk to Brené Brown about the art of apologizing and forgiving on a podcast. In the last verse we learn that this person is no longer around to accept an apology and forgiveness is impossible."

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More about Jeremy Siskind and The Housewarming Project:

Jeremy Siskind began writing music and lyrics inspired by poets like Jorge Luis Borges, Seamus Heaney, and Derek Walcott in 2011. These songs have been brought to life by vocalist **Nancy Harms**, who ushers a listener into a magical, mysterious world with her innate story-telling abilities; and **Lucas Pino**, who colors the music with whispering/roaring tenor work, mournful clarinet, and murmuring bass clarinet.

The group's two albums, *Finger-Songwriter* (2012), and *Housewarming* (2014), have both received critical acclaim and landed on many "Best of the Year" lists in blogs and magazines. *Housewarming* was lauded as, "a shining example of chamber jazz," in a four-star review, by *DownBeat* magazine, who included it as part of their annual "Best of the Year" list.

When the trio began touring in 2012, they focused on matching the intimacy of the music with intimacy of venues, leading to a strong interest in in-home concerts. As of 2018, the Housewarming Project has performed in approximately 130 homes of all shapes and sizes in 25 different states and Siskind has become a leader of the house concert movement, writing about the experience for *Clavier Companion* and *Piano Teacher Magazine*, and presenting on the subject at the Chamber Music America, Jazz Education Network, and Music Teachers National Association conferences.

The Housewarming Project is a jazz trio that moves with the grace of a chamber ensemble and sings with the soul of the singer-songwriter movement. Their latest release, *Songs Of Rebirth*, is a collection of music possessing great depth and beauty. These songs are imbued with stories of the human condition; joy, lamentation, failure, success, love and loss, and everything in between, brought to their glorious existence by three consummate artists who are clearly meant to create with one another, **pianist Jeremy Siskind**, **vocalist Nancy Harms** and **saxophonist Lucas Pino**.

For full track-by-track song descriptions and commentary from Siskind, please contact Red Cat Publicity.

Please Visit:

www.JeremySiskind.com & www.OutsideInMusic.com

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