

**SING DAMERON! The Tadd Dameron Vocal Legacy**  
**Re-imagining the masterworks of one of the unsung giants through the**  
**vocal artistry of Vanessa Rubin & an all-star cast of musicians**

World Premiere: Kennedy Center, February 25 & 26, 2005  
Available for performances & touring

The torch will be passed between native Clevelanders as the renowned, honey-voiced vocalist Vanessa Rubin has assembled an auspicious cast to pay homage to one of the truly unsung masters of jazz composition and arrangement, Tadd Dameron. Powered by an all-star ensemble, **Sing Dameron! The Tadd Dameron Vocal Legacy** program features Ms. Rubin as vocal centerpiece in an evening that successfully balances some of Dameron's more noted and widely interpreted gems: "If You Could See Me Now," "Our Delight," "Good Bait," "Lady Bird," and a reprise of Tadd's classic arrangement of "I Want To Talk About You" for Billy Eckstine's orchestra; along with some of Dameron's exquisite rarities: "I Think I'll Go Away," "Weekend," "You're a Joy," "I Think I'll Go Away," and others.

Vanessa Rubin has recruited the arranging skills of some of the most noted writers in jazz, including such Dameron contemporaries and intimates as the NEA Jazz Masters Frank Foster, Jimmy Heath, and Benny Golson, and the brilliant Cleveland-based arranger Willie Smith, who lent his fine touch to Joe Lovano's recent exploration of Dameronia. The evening's musical director is frequent Rubin collaborator, trumpeter-composer-arranger Cecil Bridgewater.

**Why Tadd Dameron?**

Born February 21, 1917 in Cleveland, OH, Tadd Dameron passed on to ancestry on March 8, 1965. He was a pianist, arranger, composer and bandleader who rose to prominence as a classic "musician's musician" during the bebop era of the 1940s and 50s. As opposed to many of the characteristic bop "blowing vehicles", Dameron's compositions weren't necessarily interpreted for the lightening quickness of their uptempo qualities, quirky chord changes, or their openness to improvisational flights, more for their inherent beauty and warmth.

Dameron's arrangements and compositions, which continue to have great currency, found welcome homes in the big bands of Harlan Leonard, and most notably the groundbreaking Dizzy Gillespie Orchestra, which premiered his extended composition "Soulphony" at Carnegie Hall in 1948. Dameron achieved a great deal of artistic success piloting small groups from the late 1940s to the mid-1950s; bands which included such historic figures and major stylists as trumpeters Fats Navarro, his closest musical associate, and Clifford Brown. Dameron's artistry at the piano and at the helm of his bands was mainly in service to his exquisite compositions, some of which – such as the extended piece "Fountainbleau" – weren't necessarily written as vehicles for improvisation. The height of Dameron's writing for voice would have to be "If You Could See Me

Now,” which became an essential part of the book of his contemporary Sarah Vaughan.

One may often judge the effectiveness, resonance, and sustained excellence of a composer and his work by the disparate nature of his interpreters. Tadd Dameron’s compositions have been performed by instrumentalists ranging from his contemporaries Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, Bud Powell, and Dexter Gordon to such diverse interpreters of his music as John Coltrane, Cal Tjader, Archie Shepp, Wes Montgomery, Paul Motian, Scott Hamilton, Elvin Jones, Pharoah Sanders, Tito Puente and a legion of others who’ve fallen under the spell of Dameron.

Vocally the field of Dameron admirers and interpreters is equally broad and diverse, though not as heavily populated: from Sarah Vaughan, Billy Eckstine, and Carmen McRae to Etta Jones, Morgana King, and Mark Murphy; giving further wing to this thoroughly unique new program of Dameronia. And that’s where Vanessa Rubin comes in. She too has been a tireless interpreter of Dameron, including an exquisite reading of the rare “Weekend” on her *Pastiche* album (RCA Novus).

For her auspicious **Sing Dameron!** project Ms. Rubin was initially inspired by Carmen McRae’s celebrated Thelonious Monk vocal recording project. “Monk’s music was never really considered among the vocal repertoire until after *Carmen Sings Monk*,” Rubin accurately assesses. “However, Dameron being thought of as the romanticist of that period, wrote some beautiful things beyond “If You Could See Me Now” that thank God for Sarah Vaughan, her style and popularity at the time, gave that song a larger presence. This program is another way of paying homage to the unsung hero Tadd Dameron, and to our shared hometown.”

### **About Vanessa Rubin**

Cleveland native Vanessa Rubin possesses superb vocal artistry, a classic sense of swing, and the innate ability to deliver a song with great feeling and expressiveness. Something of a “singer’s singer”, Ms. Rubin was educated at Ohio State University and subsequently spent many semesters teaching school. She comes by her music skills through the university of the streets, as well as study with such luminaries as Barry Harris. Her musical affiliations have included Pharoah Sanders, Mercer Ellington, Frank Foster’s Loud Minority big band, Lionel Hampton, and a host of others. In her unique vocal approach one hears not only the influence of Sarah and Carmen, but also traces of Ella Fitzgerald and Nancy Wilson. Vanessa Rubin has recorded for the RCA Novus, BMG, and Telarc labels, including *I’m Glad There is You – A Tribute to Carmen McRae*.

### **For bookings:**

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# The Washington Post



## The Tadd Dameron Vocal Legacy

By Mike Joyce

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### Vanessa Rubin

Saturday night at the Kennedy Center KC Jazz Club, vocalist Vanessa Rubin described her tribute to Tadd Dameron, the bebop pianist and composer who died in 1965, as a "work in progress." If so, it came within inches of being a complete joy.

Some fine-tuning is in order, Rubin said of the program, already brimming with lovely melodies, imaginative horn charts and seldom heard tunes. What could further enhance the experience? News that the homage will soon be available on CD would have been welcome -- that's for sure.

Appearing before a capacity crowd that included Dameron's widow, Mia, Rubin was in fine form, her supple voice gracefully negotiating tricky, bop-inspired intervals. But more striking was the interpretative finesse she displayed while performing a wide range of tunes, from torchy ballads ("If You Could See Me Now") and swinging sprees ("Good Bait") to lesser known delights ("Weekend") and amusing novelties ("Kitchenette Across the Hall"). Given the list of renowned jazz vocalists associated with Dameron's work -- Sarah Vaughan and Carmen McRae spring to mind -- Rubin didn't assign herself an enviable role. Yet she had no difficulty infusing Dameron's legacy with her own personality and musicianship, even when recalling the big-band era days when Vaughan and Billy Eckstine shared the stage together.

Part of the Kennedy Center's ongoing 1940s festival, the concert showcased a first-rate octet, led by trumpeter Cecil Bridgewater and driven by drummer Carl Allen, plus a series of lyrical, lively and lush arrangements crafted by Dameron, Jimmy Heath and Frank Foster, among others.