



Gretchen Parlato *The Lost and Found*

Gretchen Parlato's 2009 sophomore breakthrough, *In a Dream*, signaled the arrival of an incredibly inventive modern jazz singer. Her follow-up, *The Lost and Found*, demonstrates that she has staying power. *In a Dream* garnered international acclaim with *Billboard* magazine hailing it as "the most alluring jazz vocal album of 2009"; it also made it onto the top year-end polls for *Jazz Times*, *the Boston Globe*, *the Village Voice* and *NPR*. *The Lost and Found* shows immediate weight and intensity, exposing a greater dynamic range. "I feel like I stepped out of my own way and allowed myself to be more revealing and vulnerable through the music," reflects Parlato.

Revealing a seamless, crystalline, and more importantly, personal voice, Parlato says that the overall theme of *The Lost and Found* is about accepting opposition and embracing the ebbs and flows of life. "One day we may think we've found all the answers, and then something suddenly happens that makes us feel completely lost as though nothing makes sense. This is life. Accepting that we are always in transition without attaching a judgment to the experience is freeing. We are always the lost and found."

An alumni of the Thelonious Monk Institute, Parlato has been turning heads ever since she won the 2004 Thelonious Monk Institute International Vocal Competition with which she displayed a musical individuality loaded with paradoxical powers. Her sultry, intriguing voice and unique, rhythmically agile phrasing came with inescapable centripetal force; the more intimate and understated she sang, the more she drew listeners in. Since then she has toured worldwide to sold out audiences with BBC Radio proclaiming, "Star over London...A star is born!" Her originality captivates musicians as well, prompting invitations to appear on over 50 recordings with the likes of Terence Blanchard, Kenny Barron, Terri Lynn Carrington and Esperanza Spalding. Her breathtaking performances have been captured on television in Europe and Japan and she has become a sought after clinician on vocal styling.

On her third disc, Parlato surrounds herself with a collective of kindred spirits whose tight knit sound has been cultivated through years of performing and recording together. She marshaled GRAMMY nominated pianist Taylor Eigsti, bassist Derrick Hodge and drummer Kendrick Scott as her main band mates with guest appearances from tenor saxophonist Dayna Stephens and bassist, Alan Hampton, who makes a stellar turn featured as a singer and guitarist. Leaders in their own right, this band is among the most heralded of a young, new wave in jazz. "I adore these musicians, not only for what they do, but also for who they are," Parlato says. "We couldn't have had a more supportive, productive energy recording this album." That energy allowed her to reach subliminal musical heights; one that truly engages in delightful, often adventurous musical conversations that tickle the mind, warms the heart and moves the body. "They all contributed so much to the project, in the end it truly felt like a collaborative effort."

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“Collaborative effort” is no overstatement. *The Lost and Found* sees Parlato emerging as a thoughtful composer and lyricist. In fact, she wrote lyrics to several compositions such as Eigsti's haunting “Without a Sound;” trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire's plaintive “Henya,” and Stephens' suspenseful title track. In a duet on Hampton's “Still,” Gretchen's gentle musing about compassion and forgiveness is made more poignant by his raw vocals. “Alan created such a meditative and deceptively simple groove I wanted to write lyrics that were like a mantra. Something that in its repetition becomes extremely powerful. What better theme than love?”

She also composed the music and wrote the lyrics for the evocative bossa-nova tinged, “Winter Wind,” the hopeful “How We Love,” the sensual “Better Than” and the hypnotic “Circling” that contains verses that typify the entire disc's meditations on light and darkness. “‘Circling’ plays with the idea of cycles in our lives,” explains Parlato. “The ones we have no control over like birth and death as opposed to the cycles we do control, behavior patterns that we get ourselves into.”

Pianist and GRAMMY nominated composer Robert Glasper came on board as associate producer. “I love working with Robert, not only in composing, but in re-harmonizing and arranging. There is such an immense love and respect between all of the musicians and Robert knows exactly what to do and say to keep everyone inspired.”

On *The Lost and Found*, Parlato further develops her knack for reinventing intriguing R&B songs with her daring yet delectable makeover of “All That I Can Say,” a Mary J. Blige tune, penned by Lauryn Hill, and Simply Red's “Holding Back the Years.” The latter track, which serves as the album's opener, begins with Scott laying down an infectious R&B groove. Glasper can be heard in the background, vibing to the beat as the music quickly fades into the full ensemble (recorded by Parlato on her iPhone during a rehearsal).

With both tracks, Parlato and her band retain the soulful essence of the songs while steering far enough so that they don't delve into treacle mimicry. “Gretchen doesn't try to be anything she's not. Every remake is an honest one,” Glasper says. “She's always herself.” The disc also features the jaunty “Me and You,” from singer/songwriter Josh Mease and a sterling Glasper/Parlato rearrangement of Bill Evans' “Blue in Green” with lyrics by Meredith D'Ambrosio.

Gretchen Parlato is on an exploration, which leads the conversation among the band and makes for unexpected treasures. Inspired by Wayne Shorter, one of her mentors, she wrote lyrics to his classic '60s jazz composition “Juju.” The interaction between Gretchen and saxophonist Stephens showcases her ability to use her voice as an instrument—blending with the horn while adding counterpoints. On “Without A Sound,” her haunting vocals seem to add another dimension to the remarkably textured harmony already created by Hodge layering 3 parts using only his electric bass. And on one of the disc's most revealing moments, the singer shows her love for Brazilian music on Paulinho da Viola's “Alo Alo.” A solo rendition, Parlato layers all of the percussion and sings all the vocals.”

With *The Lost and Found*, Parlato has delivered a powerful testament to the beauty of space and simplicity. “I've become more interested in finding not only a higher, but a deeper level

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and connection in music. And this seems to be done by shedding everything, and getting right to the heart and core."

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