



VA VIRGINIA SCHENCK VOCAL ARTIST

Virginia Schenck, known by the stage name VA, is an accomplished international vocal artist and jazz performer, utilizing straight-ahead, spoken word, and free improvisation. She is an imaginative vocalist with a broad stylistic reach. VA can soothe her audience with a beautiful ballad, invigorate them with a re-imagined standard and challenge them with a powerful blast of free improvisation. Yet all of these aspects exist within one singular and unique voice.

VA often spices up her performances with world music influences from her own vocal exploration and CircleSinging, which she studied under the renowned Bobby McFerrin. VA's work with McFerrin came full circle when she performed with him in 2018 at Atlanta's Woodruff Arts Center.

In 2020, VA released her critically acclaimed fourth album *Battle Cry* to use the power of music to generate change. Receiving global airplay and heralded by critics as "a powerful salvo," "creativity on parade," and "explosive jazz vocal magic," the message of the album is not only of resistance, but also of peace, unity, and hope. Meant to draw people into conversation, "this album neither heals nor takes up arms in defiance. Rather, VA offers up her selections as a foundation for reflections," says Stephen Smoliar of the Rehearsal Studio.

As a social activist, VA strongly believes in using her voice for change. Her grandmother, a suffragette in Philadelphia, was pregnant with her mother while campaigning for women's voting rights in the 1920s. Almost a century later, moved by the need for human and civil rights action, VA was prompted to further her commitment to speaking, singing, and advocating. "Now more than ever, we need to have boots on the ground and continue to lift our voices in the air," says VA.

In 2019, VA was honored to perform at Atlanta's first Day of Religious Pluralism marking the 51st anniversary of the death of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. with a continued mission to deepen Atlantans' understanding of one another, and to promote a safe, respectful, and inclusive city.

VA has proudly shared the stage with other trailblazers, including author and activist Marianne Williamson, Peabody Award-winning broadcaster, nation Humanities Medalist, and New York Times bestselling author Krista Tippett, Franciscan priest of the New Mexico Province and founder of the Center for Action and Contemplation Richard Rohr, and Anglo-Irish poet and author David Whyte. VA also appeared in *The Gift*, a play with totally improvised, music, in New York, New Jersey, and Seattle. In addition, she performed with aerial dancers at The Robert Mondavi Center/UC-Davis in Calif., Chartres Cathedral in France, St Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin, Ireland, the Kripalu Yoga and Retreat Center in Stockbridge, Mass., and private concerts in Rome, Italy.

In 2018, VA co-led a pilgrimage to the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture with Rev. Kimberly Jackson, an ordained LGBTQ+ Episcopal priest and Georgia Senator, and Dr. Catherine Meeks, executive director for the Absalom Jones Center for Racial Healing. She was invited to sing "Strange Fruit," the protest song immortalized by Billie Holiday, in a memorial service for Georgia's

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lynching victims at the Center for Racial Healing at the Atlanta University Center Consortium (AUCC), comprised of historic Black colleges and universities Clark Atlanta University, Morehouse College, and Spelman College.

When not performing, VA conducts soul-inspiring Singing Journey Retreats to explore the world of improvisation and the voice as a spiritual tool. A believer in the power of place, VA has taken singers to the middle of Times Square in New York City to both listen and sing together in the chaos to explore the world of improvisation. Leaning into Gullah and Irish influences, her pilgrimages have taken groups to places like Ireland to explore the voices, sounds, and sacred sites of that country; and to Charleston, SC to be influenced and informed by the music and surroundings of one of America's first ports and the rich heritage of the Gullah coast. In the same vein, she also has taken groups on journeys to Ghost Ranch in New Mexico to "sing our bones alive" in the painted desert, open sky, and vast inspiration of iconic visual artist Georgia O'Keeffe's world.

VA started singing jazz gigs while in school at Florida State University's School of Music. While her degree is in Music Therapy, she also studied piano, voice, and dance in classical, modern, and jazz. VA has worked as a board-certified music therapist primarily in the fields of psychology and addiction. She was a pioneer in the early applications of music therapy-assisted childbirth and hospice care. VA drew inspiration from CircleSinging with McFerrin when she created SoulSong Circle using vocal improvisation in therapeutic work which was published in the *International Dictionary of Music Therapy* in 2013. Now, VA has evolved her experiences in the specialty and is also called upon for speaking engagements and continuing education leadership opportunities to use her wealth of knowledge to further the mission of music and arts in healing.

She launched her professional music therapy career in Macon, Ga., and while working in Macon, she met drummer Jaimoe Johnson of the legendary Allman Brothers Band. Her love of jazz was further enriched through their longtime friendship.

Preceding VA's *Battle Cry* CD, her debut CD, *VA (2012)*, generated serious buzz with jazz fans immediately receiving global airplay with 2012 NEA Jazz Master, Sheila Jordan, exclaiming "Wonderful CD...Wonderful singer!" Her CDs, *Interior Notions (2015)* and *Aminata Moseka: An Abbey Lincoln Tribute (2017)* have followed similar suit.

As an arts advocate and a believer in the healing power of music, VA was thrilled to join the boards of ArtsATL in 2020 to support and serve the arts community in her hometown of Atlanta, Ga. and The Sophia Institute in 2023 based in Charleston, SC.

Follow Virginia Schenck/VA on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

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**Recordings:**

Battle Cry (Airborne Ecstasy, 2020)

Aminata Moseka – an Abbey Lincoln Tribute (Airborne Ecstasy, 2017)

Interior Notions (Airborne Ecstasy, 2015)

VA (Airborne Ecstasy, 2012)

Social Media

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