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NEWS RELEASE

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New York Voices' Lauren Kinhan Delivers A Striking Collection of Original Songs on *Circle In a Square*, A Jazz Journey Balancing Personal Tales and Universal Themes

Her Third Solo Album Features a Cast of Masters, Including Randy Brecker, Romero Lubambo, Donny McCaslin, Joel Frahm, and Gary Versace

While Lauren Kinhan is best known for her ongoing two-decade tenure in the internationally renowned New York Voices, she has steadily established herself as a powerful composer in her own right. Following up on her acclaimed 2010 album *Avalon*, she offers an emotionally incisive and melodically enticing set of new songs on *Circle In a Square*, which is slated for release on January 7, 2014 on Dotted i Records. Long recognized as a poised and penetrating musical interpreter, Kinhan focuses on telling her own stories with songs seasoned by life and the contributions of some of jazz's most evocative improvisers.

Working with ace pianist/keyboardist Andy Ezrin, veteran bassists Will Lee or David Finck interchangeably and the supremely supple drummer Ben Wittman, whose credits include Don Byron, Laurie Anderson and Paul Simon, Kinhan maintains the core rhythm section throughout the project. Without a trace of fussiness, she treats each track as a finely etched entity unto itself, bringing together just the right combination of elements.

"Twenty-five years ago I up and moved from my cozy Columbus Avenue apartment in Boston and departed for the mystery and magic of Gotham. Those were ambitious days, full of hard knocks, slinging beers as a waitress, gigging and discovering my musical path. Fast forward to today: I wanted to mark this milestone with a body of work that incorporates all the things I've learned along the way," says Kinhan, who produced the album with Elliot Scheiner, a studio maestro with 24 Grammy Award nominations and seven Grammys.

"I've always enjoyed the collaborative writing process," she says, "but this time I wanted to shape each song as much as possible from my own head, capturing my personal harmonic and lyrical palette and crafting the overall musical statement. Elliot created an environment conducive for everyone doing their best work."

With credits that range from Steely Dan, Sting, and Paul Simon to B.B. King, Chaka Khan, and

Van Morrison, Scheiner is an expert at capturing an artist's sonic nuances. With Kinhan, he was particularly struck by the consistent quality of her compositions. "Beyond how effortlessly and beautifully Lauren sings, I was blown away by what a great songwriter she is," Scheiner says. "Her songs will be considered standards in the future."

Kicking off with the title track, Kinhan lays her cards on the table, celebrating music's power to transport us to a particular time and place in our life. In the first of several keenly incisive solos throughout the album, trumpeter Randy Brecker tips his hat to the Beatles' "Penny Lane" and then distills the mood of pleasurable longing in a series of graceful phrases. Saxophonist Ada Rovatti contributed to the music, coming up with the aggressive groove. Kinhan's heady lyric invoking Newton's Third Law of Motion (For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction) is beautifully balanced by the story of her husband's love of his record collection.

On an album filled with gems, "Another Hill to Climb" stands out with a lovely string arrangement by Rob Mounsey featuring a quartet led by the wondrous Sara Caswell. A gospel-tinged ballad that brings to mind early Donny Hathaway, the song speaks to the need for perseverance in the face of life's inevitable vicissitudes. The piece closes with a striking string voicing, which seems to lead naturally into "Chasing the Sun," the album's only wordless piece. The soaring melody showcases Kinhan's bold, lustrous voice, which finds a perfect foil in the poetic guitar of Brazilian master Romero Lubambo.

Lubambo also plays a key role in the epic, emotionally wrenching "To Live and Die," a *cri de coeur* that delves into the turmoil of getting lost and the sense of loss afflicting those left behind. In another piece of savvy sequencing, she follows with the buoyantly grooving "Pocketful of Harlem," which kicks off with Wittman's wildly inventive drum solo. Kinhan beautifully evokes the challenges inherent in long relationships on "We're Not Going Anywhere Today," a poignant piece with a gorgeous lament of a solo by Ezrin, one of the under sung masters of New York's music scene. "The trust between all of us to play this slow and undulating dance is what it's all about," Kinhan says.

She's at her most playful on the voluptuously sensual tango "Chaussure's Complex," an erotic tableau defined by Gary Versace's agile accordion. The album closes with a sublime ballad, "The Deep Within," a poem by Kinhan about the soul's resilience set to a numinous melody by Kinhan and fellow New York Voice Peter Eldridge (who contributes to the recording on piano). "I love singing this song," Kinhan says. "The sweet motivic melody breathes from performance to performance, centering and reminding, like a lullaby that summons the spirit. Peter and I have collaborated over the years, and this song is something truly special."

Kinhan is something of a magnet for adventurous vocalists. She's performed with New York Voices since 1992, and is deep into the ensemble's 25th anniversary celebration, which they've marked with the release of three projects, the DVD/CD *New York Voices Live at the Java Jazz Festival*, and the CDs *New York Voices Live with the WDR Big Band* and *Let it Snow*, a holiday album. She's a charter member of the supergroup Moss with fellow vocal explorers Luciana Souza, Kate McGarry, Theo Bleckmann and Peter Eldridge, which released an acclaimed eponymous CD in 2008 on Sunnyside.

More recently she teamed up with The Manhattan Transfer's Janis Siegel, and former, founding Transferer Laurel Massé in JaLaLa, an uproariously skilled and entertaining trio

that released the Johnny Mercer tribute *That Old Mercer Magic* in 2009 on Dare Records. And she joined a stellar cast of singers on an ambitious Bobby McFerrin choral project - VOCAbuLarieS - a collection of his original songs set for multiple voices arranged by Roger Treece, a project released on Decca in 2010.

Raised in a jazz-steeped household, Kinhan became enamored with the signature singer/songwriters of the 1970s like Joni Mitchell and Carole King. While studying at Berklee College of Music she started composing and thinking about how to merge these two passions – jazz and the singer/songwriter narrative. Working as a studio singer and songwriter in New York City, she caught the ear of avant garde patriarch Ornette Coleman, who gave her strong encouragement. He ended up hiring her for his celebrated 1997 album *Sound Museum, Three Women*, which features her searing vocals on his tune “Don’t You Know By Now.” Lauren joined him on his historic retrospective at Lincoln Center with Billy Higgins, Charlie Haden, and Geri Allen, where she sang his song and one of her own compositions.

The year 2000 marked another creative leap for Kinhan. She collaborated with the Japanese guitarist Jiro Yoshida on *Guitar and the Moon*, an album of jazz standards featuring bassist Eddie Gomez, pianist Andy Ezrin and drummer Ben Wittman (*Circle In a Square* reunited her with Yoshida, who collaborated on the music of the funky, bebopping “Bear Walk” where Brecker makes another stunning appearance). The same year she also released her debut solo project, *Hardly Blinking*, an impressive program of original songs produced by the legendary Phil Ramone, along with Frank Filipetti, and Rob Mounsey.

In the decade between *Hardly Blinking* and her second album, *Avalon*, Kinhan started a family, and her new music was powerfully informed by that wonderful life-changing event. Combining her sophisticated harmonic vocabulary and love of pop music craftsmanship she created a smart, bracingly contemporary sound marked by scintillating wordplay and felicitous melodies. With *Circle In a Square* she continues to hone music that’s tradition savvy but utterly of the moment. Rooted in jazz’s improvisational imperative, Kinhan knows that you best celebrate the music by remaking it in your own image.

“Think of me as a horn player who sings a lyric or a dancer filling a phrase, a reedy voice that’s lived in, adventurous and unapologetic,” Kinhan says. “It all circles around living in the moment, telling a story and letting conventions be undressed and re-outfitted.”

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