

## **Sunny Wilkinson Quartet – Biography**

The child of a Methodist minister, Sunny Wilkinson grew up singing in church and around the piano in four-part harmony with her family. She earned her degree in Choral Education from Arizona State University, and during that time delved into diverse styles of music, singing the operatic roles of Marcellina in the *Marriage of Figaro*, the Wicked Witch in *Hansel and Gretel*, as well as the role of Winnifred in the musical comedy *Once Upon a Mattress*. She also played trombone and sang in the ASU jazz band. Weekend nights, she played and sang in a jazz fusion band called *Goldmine*.

Sunny's most recent CD, "Into The Light" (2018) recorded with her quartet (Ron Newman, Larry Ochiltree, and Ed Fedewa) reached #26 on the Jazz Week's Jazz Album Chart.

After college, Sunny spent fifteen years in Los Angeles, honing her professional chops as a jazz recording artist, session singer, performer, and teacher. She sang on the theme and numerous episodes of "Saved By the Bell," and was a "Solid Gold" singer, backing Marilyn McCoo and Dionne Warwick, both on screen and in the recording studio. For twelve years, Borrowed Time, an eclectic jazz vocal group with Sunny on alto, performed in LA clubs and jazz festivals.

Over the years, Sunny has sung with The Count Basie Band, Rob McConnell and the Boss Brass, Mark Murphy, Milt Hinton, Kenny Wheeler, Clark Terry, Bill Watrous, Ron Carter, Curtis Fuller, Edgar Winter, and Gene Bertoncini, among others. A busy travel schedule has her presenting clinics and performances at universities and jazz festivals, as well as jazz clubs, across the United States.

Sunny has also made significant contributions in jazz education. She has been on the jazz faculty at Michigan State University, Western Michigan University, Cal State Northridge, Fullerton College, and the Dick Grove School of Music, as well as teaching numerous private voice students. Presently she is adjunct faculty at Western Michigan University and an artist in residence at the University of Michigan. She served as a President of the Michigan chapter of the International Association of Jazz Educators and the past chairperson for IAJE's Women's Caucus. Many of her former students are now the heads of vocal jazz programs at universities around the country and have successful careers as jazz performers and recording artists.

[www.SunnyWilkinson.com](http://www.SunnyWilkinson.com)

### **QUOTES:**

"Acclaimed jazz vocalist and educator Sunny Wilkinson offers exceptional interpretations of music from various genres as well as several original compositions composed with her pianist/composer husband Ron Newman on her latest release on Sunchance Music titled *Into The Light*. Sunny's

multi-octave vocals are delivered with passion and perfection as she reflects on personal experiences that have become her songs. The set list of intimate ballads and up-tempo gems are offered with an emotional and thoughtful approach that her listeners are sure to enjoy.” – Paula Edelstein, Sounds Of Timeless Jazz

“Wilkinson accomplishes what would take lesser talents much larger ensembles to achieve. A big sound comes from these modest forces, one that matches the big sound that comes from Wilkinson herself... Her control of her instrument is impressive and complete, as are her scat chops.” - C. Michael Bailey, All About Jazz

“On her latest album, Sunny Wilkinson proves that she is not only an extraordinary jazz vocalist, but an exceptional songwriter, as well... Whether sultry, swinging or scatting, Wilkinson’s voice is always a finely tuned, pleasing instrument.” - Paul Freeman, Pop Culture Classics

**Ron Newman**, Piano. Ron Newman has been a member of the Michigan State University faculty since 1980, where he served as Director of Jazz Studies from 1980 until 1995, and where he is currently Professor of Music Theory. He received an undergraduate degree in Music Education from the University of North Texas, and Master's and Ph.D. degrees in Music Composition from Michigan State University. He has received composition commissions from a variety of sources, including the National Endowment for the Humanities and The New York Concert Artist's Guild. Since 2011 he has been the conductor and music director for the Lansing Symphony Jazz Band. Additionally, he is active as a pianist and composer in both the classical and jazz venues, most notably in concerts with his wife, jazz vocalist Sunny Wilkinson.

**Ed Fedewa**, Bass. Ed Fedewa has performed in virtually every musical genre from classical soloist to country music sideman. He has been involved in the education of beginning as well as advanced bass students for over twenty years. In addition to a full time musical career, Mr. Fedewa is actively involved in the repair and conditioning of the double bass. He received his master's degree in music from Michigan State University. He has been involved with many recordings, continues to hold the position of principal bass with the Greater Lansing Symphony Orchestra, is Professor of Bass at Central Michigan University and focuses much of his time playing jazz.

**Larry Ochiltree**, Drums, is from Battle Creek Michigan. Having toured extensively throughout the United States and Europe, he has performed with jazz greats Mark Murphy, Maynard Ferguson, Tony Bennett, The Drifters, The Coasters, Bobby Watson, Ira Sullivan, Marcus Belgrave, and the Battle Creek Symphony Orchestra, among others. Larry received his BA in marketing from Michigan State University and studied music at Western Michigan University and Berklee School of Music. He is a clinician for the Ludwig Drum Company, The Zildjian Cymbal Company, and endorses Pro Mark sticks and Remo drum heads, Stellar Hoops, and MAYEA microphones. Larry is on the music faculty at Hillsdale College where he is Director of drumset studies and a member of the Faculty Jazz Quartet. He has recorded with the Rick Holland Quartet, Kerry Strayer, Dave Lambert, Patti Richards, John Tooney, Ron Newman, Rob Killips, Terry Lower, and most recently, on Sunny Wilkinson's new CD, *Into the Light*. He has appeared in *Modern Drummer*, *Who's Who in Music*, *Jazz Iz*, and *Downbeat*.



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