

Carmen Bradford is jazz royalty - A 2024 Grammy Award winner for *Basie Swings the Blues – the Count Basie Orchestra*. She has been nominated five times for Grammy Awards and is the recipient of the Los Angeles Jazz Society's *Jazz Vocalist Award*. With her body of work, which reflects her vast experience, versatility, and technical brilliance, she has carved out her place in jazz history, and she continues to contribute to the preservation of this uniquely American art form.

Bradford was born in Austin, Texas, and raised in Altadena, California. The daughter of legendary cornetist and composer *Bobby Bradford* and world-renowned jazz vocalist, composer, and author *Melba Joyce*, and granddaughter of *Melvin Moore* (who sang with *Lucky Millender* and his Big Band, *Dizzy Gillespie's Big Band*, and the *Ink Spots*), Bradford grew up with music in her home and in her heart.

She was discovered and hired by *William Count Basie* when she was just 22; she went on to be the featured vocalist with the legendary *Count Basie Orchestra* for nine years and has continued to perform with them regularly throughout her career. All four of her Grammy Award nominations are for albums with the *Count Basie Orchestra*, including two in the 1980s and a third, *Big Boss Band*, with guitarist *George Benson*. (She and Benson performed the classic duet, *How Do You Keep the Music Playing*, on the *Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson*.) The fourth is 2022's *Live At Birdland*.

In 1992, Bradford released her debut album *Finally Yours* (Evidence Records) to critical acclaim. In 1995, the release of her second solo album, *With Respect* (Evidence Records), established Bradford as one of jazz music's most diverse and exciting vocal stylists.

Bradford has performed and/or recorded with *Patti Austin*, *Tony Bennett*, *George Benson*, *Shelly Berg*, *James Brown*, *Benny Carter*, *Dori Caymmi*, *John Clayton* and the *Clayton-Hamilton Orchestra*, *Freddie Cole*, *Lena Horne*, *Kurt Elling*, *Wynton Marsalis*, *Jeremy Monteiro*, *David Murray*, *Willie Nelson*, *James Newton*, *Kenny Rankin*, *Lou Rawls*, *Doc Severinsen*, *Frank Sinatra*, *Byron Stripling*, *Tierney Sutton*, *Jeff Tyzik*, *Joe Williams*, *Nancy Wilson*, *Liz Wright*, and countless other artists around the world.

She has also performed and/or recorded with the *Dallas Symphony*, the *Dani Felber Big Band*, the *Detroit Symphony*, the *DIVA Jazz Orchestra*, the *Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra*, the *National Symphony*, the *Philadelphia Pops*, the *Rochester Philharmonic*, the *Vancouver Philharmonic*, and many other organizations.

Bradford teamed with singer/composer *Kenny Rankin* for the *Benny Carter Songbook Project*, performing with him the duet, *And All That Jazz*. Other notable artists on the album include *Ruth Brown*, *Jon Hendricks*, *Shirley Horn*, *Diana Krall*, *Peggy Lee*, *Diane Reeves*, *Bobby Short*, *Joe Williams*, *Nancy Wilson*, *Liz Wright*, and others. At the request of *Benny Carter*, Bradford also sang *Key Largo* on this Grammy Award-winning album.

Bradford's 2004 release, *Home With You* (Azica Records), is a warm and beautiful collection of vocal and piano duets with jazz great *Shelly Berg*. In 2008, with the release of *Live from Jazz at Lincoln Center's Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola: Sherrie Maricle & The DIVA Jazz Orchestra featuring Carmen Bradford*, Bradford returned to her big band roots. That recording ultimately brought her back to her first big band family, as well: She continues to tour with the *Count Basie Orchestra*, always grateful to *Count Basie* for opening the door for her. *When the Count Basie Orchestra calls me*, she says, *I go*.

The 2015 release of *Invisible Design*, with jazz great *John Mills*, showcases Bradford's versatility. 2015 also saw the release of *A Very Swingin' Basie Christmas* with the *Count Basie Orchestra* (conducted by *Scotty Barnhart*). The album features Bradford, *Ledisi*, *Ellis Marsalis*, and *Johnny Mathis*.

In 2016, Bradford was the voice on the album *Imagination Nation*, a tribute to Nelson Mandela by South African trumpeter *Darren English*. This critically acclaimed album won the *Pledge for Peace* award from the *Global Peace Song Awards* and was named *Best in Jazz*.

The 2019 Grammy Award-nominated album, *All About That Basie* with the *Count Basie Orchestra*, conducted by *Scotty Barnhart* on *Concord Records*, features Bradford, *Jamie Davis*, *Joey DeFrancesco*, *Kurt Elling*, *Jon Faddis*, *Wycliff Gordon*, *Stevie Wonder*, and *Take 6*. In 2021, another Grammy Award-nominated album was released: *Live At Birdland – the Count Basie Orchestra*, conducted by *Scotty Barnhart* and featuring Bradford and *Jamie Davis*.

Bradford regularly pays tribute to the great *Ella Fitzgerald* with her show, *A Century of Ella*, created and conducted by jazz great *Jeff Tyzik*. With the incredible trumpeter and vocalist *Byron Stripling*, Bradford honors Fitzgerald and *Louis Armstrong* in their show, *Ella and Louis*, which consistently performs to rave reviews. Bradford has recently added a new show, *Carmen Pays Tribute to the First Ladies of Song*.

Bradford has loaned her inimitable voice to stage productions and the music of Hollywood films, cartoons for television and radio commercials, and the theater. She sang on the haunting soundtrack for *Oprah Winfrey's Beloved* and starred in the title role of *Duke Ellington's Folk Opera, Queenie Pie*, at the *University of Texas at Austin's Butler School of Music*.

As she tours and performs around the world, Bradford continues to sing multiple genres, from straight-ahead jazz to fusion to blues – and to sing as no one else can.

In 2017, Bradford's gift for teaching and mentoring others inspired the *San Francisco Conservatory of Music* to recruit Bradford to serve as *Vocalist in Residence* and *Director of the Jazz Voice Department* in the school's new *Roots, Jazz, and American Music (RJAM) Program*.

In April 2024, Bradford joined the *Michigan State University Jazz Studies Faculty* as the new *Associate Professor of Jazz Voice*. Carmen Bradford is excited about teaching in the *MSU Jazz Studies* area after hearing the high quality of the student musicians when she visited as a guest artist in 2022.

Bradford is also *CEO and Artistic Director* of *Carmen Bradford Productions, Inc.*, and an artist with *Earthworks Audio*. In 2017, she served as a panelist for *AMPLIFY*, part of the *Emerging Black Composers Project* (a partnership among the *San Francisco Conservatory of Music (SFCM)*, the *San Francisco Symphony*, and the *SFCM President's Advisory Council on Equity and Inclusion*). She was also a *Governor of the Atlanta Chapter of the Recording Academy*.

Bradford sings on the critically acclaimed 2023 release, *Basie Swings the Blues* on *Candid Records*. In addition to Bradford, this album features some of the greatest blues artists alive today, including *George Benson*, *Castro "Mr. Sipp" Coleman*, *Shemekia Copeland*, *Robert Cray*, *Jamie Davie*, *Buddy Guy*, *Charlton Johnson*, *Betty LaVette*, *Ledisi*, *Keb' Mo'*, *Charlie Musselwhite*, and *Bobby Rush*.

Bradford's body of work reflects jazz's improvisation, creativity, and freedom. She looks forward to continuing her work to preserve this uniquely American art, so reflective of the cultural fabric of our country.