

## BIO FOR KAT PARRA

I was only 18 when I married. But I was in LOVE and nothing and no one was going to stop me, not even my desire to be a famous musician. I was already one year into my studies of classical flute at UCLA. This was the instrument I had finally chosen after playing the piano and guitar for years. The voice? Why study voice when it came so naturally to me? It was always something I took for granted. But then the pressures of marriage, two little babies and finally, a divorce, catapulted me into the jazz world at San Jose State University. "I'll study voice," I thought, since it was such an easy instrument for me. "That way I'll be able to complete my degree and get on with my life." Boy was I in for a surprise! Studying voice was one of the most wonderful challenges I had ever encountered—all thanks to Patti Cathcart (Tuck & Patti)—my teacher and spiritual musical mentor. She literally kicked my butt and woke me up to an entirely new world where my voice was the messenger. "Sing your truth" she would tell me. That's when I learned there was so much more depth to the voice than just the "sweet" sounds it could produce. There are stories to tell, heartaches to share and love to spread. The power of music is a gift that I never want to take for granted.

I have performed all styles of music: R&B, Motown, Blues, Top 40 and jazz. But it is Latin Jazz that calls to my soul more than anything. All these styles have brought me to the place where I now am, helping to shape my music in a much fuller way. Since I have a facility for languages, I am drawn to music from all over the world. (I sing in Spanish, Portuguese, Ladino and French.) But it is the music of the Spanish-speaking countries I most closely associate myself with. My focus is on Afro-Cuban, Afro-Peruvian, South American folklore, Sephardic music of the Spanish Jews and some Brazilian music, with a few standards thrown in for good measure. When all of these styles are thrown into the pot, an amazing Jazz Soup is brewed that is exciting and enthralling to listen to.

I had the fortune of performing for 4 1/2 years with a group called Charanga 9. There, I was able to hone my skills as a salsa singer. And not only did I get to perform with a group of wonderful musicians, but I was also given the opportunity to open for some of the top salsa groups of today: Celia Cruz, Los Van Van, Cubanismo, Las Perlas del Son, and Paulito FJ. I have also opened for Charlie Hunter, TJ Kirk and Cold Blood with Lydia Pense and have had incredible opportunities to perform in New York City, Chile, Cuba and all over the San Francisco Bay Area.

Now the time has come to completely devote myself to my music. I have successfully completed the job of raising two amazing sons and now it's my turn to go out into the world and do what I have always been meant to do: SING!

**Kat Parra**

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