

# Biography

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**RUTH NAOMI FLOYD** is a gifted vocalist-composer who has been at forefront of creating vocal jazz settings that express Christian theology for over 13 years. As a leader, she has released several highly acclaimed recordings. Blessed with a soaring mezzo-soprano voice, critics have praised Ms. Floyd's music for its distinctive sound of progressive ensemble jazz that is seamlessly blended with explicit Biblical messages of unwavering faith in God.

Ruth Naomi Floyd leads her own multi-faceted ensemble and her recordings consist primarily of original compositions. Her association as the co-founder of Contour Records ® affords her complete artistic freedom to record her own works and collaborate with a diverse range of musicians.

Ms. Floyd has recorded and/or performed with such notable instrumentalists as James Newton, Gary Thomas, James Weidman, Jay Hoggard, Bryan Carrott, Terri Lyne Carrington, Ralph Peterson, Jr., Uri Caine, Charles Fambrough, Julian Joseph, Craig Handy, Reggie Washington, Matthew Parrish, Mark Prince, Ed Howard, Tyrone Brown, T.K. Blue, Bobby Zankel and Greg Tardy.

Ruth Naomi Floyd, is the daughter of urban missionaries. She was born and raised in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. From a child she embraced the Christian faith and its immense body of music served as a constant influence and vital part of her life. She began to develop and share her musical talents as a young child by singing in church choirs and studying piano, flute and bassoon.

**In 1994**, Ruth Naomi Floyd released her debut recording, *Paradigms for Desolate Times* as a 12 song-cycle relating to themes of faith in salvation and rising above the difficulties of everyday life. Following a 1997 performance of these songs in London, England; *The Times* of London offered this important commentary:

*“Ruth Naomi Floyd is a woman with a mission. She writes and performs songs whose lyrics either quote scripture or roughly paraphrase it. Unusually, however, instead of operating in the musical area generally associated with gospel singers such as Mahalia Jackson, Floyd is an out-and-out jazz singer ... Floyd's voice highlights not only her superb dynamic control, flexibility and faultless diction, but also her most important asset: an unmistakable emotional integrity that conveys her music's power to even the most recalcitrant non-believer.”*

Inspired by her reading of the biblical passage from Romans 12:2; Ruth Naomi Floyd titled her 2nd recording, *With New Eyes*. Released in November 1997, *With New Eyes* was recognized as one of the best jazz vocal recordings of 1997 by jazz critic Gene Seymour for the national African American news magazine *Emerge*.

**In 1998**, Ms. Floyd began a creative collaboration with pianist James Weidman. New York based since 1978, Mr. Weidman has earned a reputation as an exceptional vocal

accompanist and sideman in demand for several notable ensembles. He has performed and recorded with some of the world's most celebrated jazz vocalists, such as Abbey Lincoln, Cassandra Wilson and Kevin Mahogany.

Ms. Floyd's collaboration with James Weidman resulted in Mr. Weidman serving as the Producer for her 3<sup>rd</sup> release, *Walk and Not Be Faint*. Released in 1999, *Walk and Not Be Faint* presented original material based upon Scripture from the books of John, Jeremiah, 1 Kings and the Psalms. In a *Los Angeles Times* review; jazz critic Don Heckman offered the following observation:

*"This may sound like an arena far removed from the more familiar jazz environs, but the quality of the music and, especially, Floyd's solid vocal skills make the album consistently rewarding... Floyd's vocals steer well clear of the overdone gospel-based techniques dominating so much of pop singing. At heart, she is clearly a jazz artist using her creative vehicle of choice to express her profound beliefs..."*

**In 2002**, Ruth Naomi Floyd released her 4<sup>th</sup> recording, *Fan Into Flame* as a concept album based upon the New Testament Scripture of 2 Timothy 1:6-8. *Cadence Jazz Magazine* described this recording as *"another powerful jazz recital from Ruth Naomi Floyd."* In a review in *JAZZIZ* magazine, jazz critic Bill Milkowski characterized *Fan Into Flame* as *"a musically superb, soul-nourishing offering"*. Mr. Milkowski went on to describe Ms. Floyd as an *"immensely gifted singer with an incredible range and openness to pushing the envelope artistically."*

**In November 2006**, Ruth Naomi Floyd marked her 5<sup>th</sup> recording with the release of *Root to the Fruit*. Produced by pianist- arranger James Weidman, *Root to the Fruit* is perhaps Ms. Floyd's preeminent conceptual work to date as this recording conceptually seeks to offer listeners a body of work that musically illustrates the historical nexus between the origins of African American Christian faith and jazz music.

Ruth Naomi Floyd is also a committed music educator. She teaches music at Spruce Hill Christian School in the City of Philadelphia and she has recently been appointed as an Adjunct Professor of Vocals in the Church Music Program at Philadelphia Biblical University of Langhorne, Pennsylvania.

Ruth Naomi Floyd continues to make the City of Philadelphia her home where for over twelve years she has been devoted and active in providing compassionate care and spiritual support to people affected by HIV and AIDS.

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**\* Bio updated as of November 3, 2006**

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