

Francesca Gagnon

THE VOICE OF ALEGRIA™

The Artists

FRANCESCA GAGNON

As a child, growing up in Québec, Canada Francesca Gagnon already had musical inclinations, beginning her studies of piano and jazz-ballet at the age of 10. A few years later, while singing Brel, Piaf and Vigneault songs on stage, she realized she had a passion for performing.

In 1980, she moved to Montréal, enrolling in music and classical singing courses at the University of Québec, and later, studied dancing and vocal techniques in New York City. To develop body strength, agility and control, precious assets for her future performances, she studied Hatha Yoga and African dance classes. Francesca began appearing on television and as a soloist in theatres and festivals and recorded her first album for EMI that was subsequently nominated for “Most Promising Female Vocalist of the Year” at the 1986 Juno Awards. One of these songs would climb the charts to No. 1 and sell over 250,000 singles.

In the fall of 1989, following the release of her second album, Francesca headed for Paris. Her unique voice gained her recognition in cafés, cabarets, theatres... The simple pleasure of singing live, of letting her bohemian soul express itself by performing anything from rhythm & blues to Piaf or Kurt Weil, earned her the title, a modern realist singer. “I love when songs have depth, meaning, and intensity, when they approach the tragic!” she claims. During her tours of Morocco, Central Africa and Cameroon, she absorbed the culture, immersing herself in the warm African rhythms and renewed her passion for the discovery of new cultures and new music.

1994 was a pivotal year in the career of Francesca: she became “the Voice of *Alegria*” for the *Cirque du Soleil* production of the same name. Charming and seducing audiences and critics all over the world with her mesmerizing voice and her incredible talent as a performer, the *Alegria* album remained on the Billboard charts in the U.S. for 56 weeks and climbed to number 1 soundtrack on the Top World Music chart. To date, more than two million copies of *Alegria* have been sold worldwide.

She won the hearts of American audiences, performing on the Tonight Show with Jay Leno and for president Bill Clinton and other celebrities. She later performed in Mexico at the Awards Ceremony and at Royal Albert Hall for Prince Charles.

In 1995, Francesca sang *Alegria*'s title track at the Montreal Jazz Festival for 200,000 people and repeated her performance at the 2004 festival. This second performance, featured on the *Cirque du Soleil* DVD, *Midnight Sun*, directed by Michel Lemieux and Victor Pilon, celebrates both the Jazz Festival's 25th Anniversary and the *Cirque du Soleil* 20th Anniversary. Meanwhile, Francesca found time to record her solo disc *Au-delà des couleurs* for BMG France, singing in French, Italian, and Spanish. The recording was nominated at the ADISQ Gala in the “World Music” category.

Returning from tours on three continents with *Cirque du Soleil*, absorbing the varied cultures and languages, Francesca worked at creating and recording *Hybride*. Inspired by each language's unique musical tone, Francesca invents her own language. “I love using my voice as an instrument”, she says. That is why she sings instinctively, bringing emotions, feelings and colors to the melodic canvas. She becomes a musical painter, leaving to her audience to interpret her music in a way that connects with their own imagination, their own soul.

In 2008 Francesca met the Chilean ensemble Inti-Illimani in Montréal. Magic ensued and it was evident they shared a mutual admiration for each other's work and a passion and love of music from any and all quarters of the world. Since that meeting they have toured Chile and North America together and in August 2010 Warner Latin released their CD *Meridiano*.

If Cirque du Soleil is indeed the eighth wonder of the world, Gagnon is the otherworldly herald who made everyone notice.
Entertainment Today, Los Angeles, CA

Fête à la Terre, the title of this intimate concert presentation, sums up her [Francesca Gagnon] love for nature, the Earth, and its inhabitants. her message is harmony amongst all.
Le Journal de Montréal

At the forefront of this production is the sumptuous voice of Francesca Gagnon, a Canadian singer; who lends an ethereal air to the [Cirque du Soleil] show with her unique singing.
The Press Democrat, San Francisco, CA



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DAVID VESLOCKI

guitar

New York City guitarist David Veslocki has been heard on ABC, BBC, Animal Planet, Universal Music Killer Tracks, HBO. He has performed in some of the greatest halls in the world; Avery Fisher Hall, Kilbourne Hall, The Eastman Theatre, The 92nd Street Y, the Bushnell, South Korea's Woodbridge Music Hall. David is an endorsee of Parker Guitars, D'addario strings, and Blackbird Guitars. David tours regularly to the UK, Europe, South Korea, and throughout the United States, and has shared the stage with Derek Trucks, The Average White Band, Clark Terry, and several Disney Artists. David's original composition and production *A Better Life*, co-written with Courtney Drummey, appeared on a benefit album for Connecticut Foster Children alongside star Jamie Fox. David has studied with some of the finest guitarists in the world including Nicholas Goluses and Benjamin Verdery as well as countless legendary guitarists in masterclass including David Leisner, Sharon Isbin, and Elliot Fisk. David is the winner of the Elliot Fisk Award, three Downbeat Magazine Awards, and the Hartford Jazz Society Award. David has gathered a good deal of world premiers, including Pete Wier's *10,000 Cranes*, Ricardo Muldoon's *Guitango*, and Shingo Fujii's *Concerto De Los Angeles*. His symphonic appearances have included the Rochester Philharmonic, the Orchestra of the Americas, and the Hartford Symphony. David attended Yale University's School of Music (full scholarship), and is the only guitarist to have graduated with both a degree in Classical and Jazz performance from the prestigious Eastman School of Music (also on full scholarship). David teaches guitar and recording at Concordia Conservatory, and the 92nd Street Y in New York, and is the co founder of Guitar Ambassadors LLC.

