Saxophonist, Flutist, and Educator Sharel Cassity is prominent on the New York and Chicago jazz scenes. Voted the 2023 "Rising Star Alto Saxophone" and having a cover feature in *Downbeat Magazine*, Sharel has appeared on the *Today Show, Good Morning America*, and *The Colbert Show*; she is in the *Oklahoma Jazz Hall of Fame* and is a recipient of the *ASCAP Young Jazz Composers Award.*

Sharel has worked with Multi-Grammy Award-winning artist Jennifer Hudson, Top 40 hit singer-songwriter Natalie Merchant, Aretha Franklin, Vanessa Williams, Trisha Yearwood, Ruben Blades, & DJ Logic, among others. An avid jazz artist, Sharel has performed with NEA Jazz Masters Herbie Hancock, Wynton Marsalis, Dee Dee Bridgewater, Jimmy Heath, and Gary Bartz; she has also appeared as a featured soloist with the Cincinnati Pops Orchestra. As a bandleader, Sharel's five albums as a leader have received top-rated reviews in publications like the Chicago Tribune, New York Times, JazzTimes, Jazziz, American Indian News, & earned cover stories in Saxophone Journal and Downbeat Magazine. Cassity's collaborations have led her to co-lead recent releases by groups Altoizm, Precarious Towers, and her upcoming 2024 female collaboration, Alliance.

An advocate for Jazz Education, Cassity established the non-profit educational program "Jazz Up!" which brings jazz professionals to students in the suburbs who cannot go to hear live Jazz or play in combo settings. Cassity is a jazz professor in the Chicago area at DePaul University & Elgin Community College.

A skilled and versatile sideman, Sharel is a current Dizzy Gillespie Latin Experience and All-Star Big Band member. She has also performed frequently alongside renowned Grammy-winning artists Wynton Marsalis, Roy Hargrove, Nicholas Payton, Lewis Nash, Joe Chambers, Michael Dease, & Darcy James Argue. Sharel has toured 24 countries and performed at leading venues like the Newport Jazz Festival, Monterey Jazz Festival, Chicago Jazz Festival, & the North Sea Jazz Festival. Additionally, Sharel was lead alto in the Diva Jazz Orchestra from 2007-2014 and performed in Wynton Marsalis' Broadway musical After Midnight.

Selected to attend The Juilliard School Jazz program under full scholarship for a Masters in Music and graduating in 2007, Sharel earned her BFA from The New School for Jazz & Contemporary Music in 2005. Sharel appears in publications "I Walked with Giants" by Jimmy Heath, "Three Generations Under the Lens" by Adrianna Mateo, and "Freedom of Expression: Interviews with Women in Jazz" by Chris Becker. Sharel is also an alumnus of the select student programs IAJE Sisters in Jazz, Betty Carter's Jazz Ahead, and the Ravinia Summer Residency.

Steeped in the classical tradition, Sharel placed third in the Disney International Piano Concerto Competition at ten and was offered a full scholarship to North Texas State University for classical saxophone at 18. She attended the University of Centeral Oklahoma in 1996 before moving to New York, where she was able to fully transition to Jazz. Born into a musical family, Sharel's father is a musician who played in New Orleans and was a professor and author of Music Therapy, and her aunt was a classical solo pianist with the Boston Pops and fullbright recipient.

Moving frequently throughout her childhood, Sharel lived with her mother, graduating high school in Yukon, Oklahoma. In 2000 she moved to New York City, relocated to Doha, Qatar, in 2015, and in 2017 settled in the Chicago area with her husband and son. Sharel is a proud Yamaha and Vandoren Performing Artist, exclusively playing Yamaha instruments and Vandoren equipment.