

Saxophonist, Composer and Educator Sharel Cassity (pron. "Sha-Relle") is well established on the New York and Chicago jazz scenes. Listed as "*Rising Star Alto Saxophone*" in *Downbeat Magazine* for the past decade, Sharel has appeared on the *Today Show*, won the 2007 ASCAP Young Jazz Composers Award & has been inducted into the Oklahoma Jazz Hall of Fame. Her four albums released as a leader have received top-rated reviews in publications like *JazzTimes*, *Jazziz*, *Downbeat* & *American Indian News* & earned her a cover story in *Saxophone Journal*. Cassity's latest album, "Evolve," was recorded and distributed on her record label, Relsha Music.

Selected to attend *The Juilliard School* Jazz program under full scholarship for a Masters in Music, Sharel earned her BFA from *The New School for Jazz & Contemporary Music* in 2005. A skilled and versatile sideman, Sharel is a regular member of the Dizzy Gillespie Latin Experience, Nicholas Payton TSO, Cyrus Chestnut Brubeck Quartet, and the Jimmy Heath Big Band. She has also performed regularly alongside renowned *Grammy-winning* artists Roy Hargrove, Lewis Nash, Joe Chambers & Darcy James Argue. Sharel has toured 24 countries and performed at leading venues like the *Newport Jazz Festival*, *Monterey Jazz Festival* & the *North Sea Jazz Festival*. Additionally, she has shared the stage with Herbie Hancock, Wynton Marsalis, Dee Dee Bridgewater, Christian McBride, and Natalie Cole. Sharel was lead alto in the Diva Jazz Orchestra from 2007-2014 and performed in Wynton Marsalis' *Broadway* musical *After Midnight*.

In mainstream genres, Sharel joined Top 40 hit singer-songwriter Natalie Merchant on her recording "Paradise is Here." She has also performed with Aretha Franklin, Vanessa Williams, K.D. Lang, Fantasia, Trisha Yearwood, Ruben Blades, and DJ Logic. 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 alumni of *IJJE Sisters in Jazz*, *Betty Carter's Jazz Ahead*, and the *Ravinia Summer Residency*.

Steeped in classical tradition, Sharel placed third in the Disney International Piano Concerto Competition at the age of 10 and was offered a full scholarship to North Texas State University for classical saxophone at 18.

Moving frequently throughout her childhood, Sharel graduated high school in Yukon, Ok. In 2000 she moved to New York City and relocated to Chicago in 2017 with her family. Currently, Cassity is a professor in the Chicago area at Columbia College, DePaul University & Elgin Community College. Sharel is a proud *Vandoren Performing Artist*.