

Saxophonist, Composer and Educator Sharel Cassity (pron. "Sha-Relle") is prominent on the New York and Chicago jazz scenes. Listed as "*Rising Star Alto Saxophone*" in *Downbeat Magazine* for the past 12 years, Sharel has appeared on the *Today Show*, *Good Morning America*, *The Colbert Show*, 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. Sharel has also worked with NEA Jazz Masters Herbie Hancock, Wynton Marsalis, Dee Dee Bridgewater, Jimmy Heath, and Christian McBride; she has also appeared as a guest soloist with the Cincinnati Pops Orchestra. As a bandleader, Sharel's five albums have received top-rated reviews in publications like the *Chicago Tribune*, *New York Times*, *JazzTimes*, *Jazziz*, *Downbeat* & *American Indian News*, & *Saxophone Journal*. Cassity runs her record label "Relsha Music" and directs the educational program "Jazz Up."

A skilled and versatile sideman, Sharel is a current member of the *Dizzy Gillespie Latin Experience* and *All-Star Big Band*. She has also performed frequently alongside renowned *Grammy-winning* artists Roy Hargrove, Nicholas Payton, 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, 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, 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 alumni of *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 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, Oklahoma. 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 *Yamaha* and *Vandoren Performing Artist*