

BIO (MEDIUM)

Kate Baker's debut recording was her late husband Vic Juris's swan song. But that's not the beginning, nor the end, of the story.

In early 2019, the married collaborators — who had performed together for two decades — recorded *Return to Shore*. A captivating set of duo recordings, the album showcased Baker's fluid, radiant voice and Juris's supple guitar mastery in an intimate, unadorned setting. Tragically, soon after these sessions, Juris learned he had neuroendocrine cancer. That New Year's Eve, the disease took his life at 66.

Upon *Return to Shore*'s release on Oct. 7, 2022, the plaudits were extraordinary. Downbeat assigned the album 4 and a half stars; the Arts Fuse deemed it one of the [best jazz albums of 2022](#); Making a Scene called it “one of the most intimate, tender recordings in recent memory.”

The album's backstory drew jazz critics to identify emotional power in the choice of material: Lerner and Loewe's standard “I've Grown Accustomed to His Face,” Joni Mitchell's “Black Crow” and “Both Sides Now,” and — perhaps most poignantly — the Beach Boys' “God Only Knows.”

But if the jaw-droppingly talented Juris was still with us — and by all rights, he should be — *Return to Shore* would still belong on your shelf. Because the album succeeds on a simpler merit: a couple of musical masters made it.

While *Return to Shore* marks Baker's debut recording, it by no means marks the inauguration of her musical legacy. She's been a mainstay on the performance circuit since she began singing rock music at 20, later moving on to Americana-laced sounds, purveyed in solo and duo settings.

The throughline is Baker's inimitable voice, which resonates with her love of diverse musical inspirations — whether jazz, Brazilian, Latin, or the blues. Be it English or Portuguese, a Cole Porter standard or an Antônio Carlos Jobim composition, Baker effortlessly makes herself right at home.

For two decades, she frequently performed with Juris, but that, too, isn't the long and short of it. Across the years and decades, the list of luminaries the native New Jerseyan has performed with is a cross-section of the global jazz landscape.

Along the way, Baker has performed at venues and festivals both stateside and abroad, and forged a concurrent legacy as a vocal coach — sometimes nicknamed “the voice whisperer.”

The litany of [heartfelt testimonials](#) on her website say it all.

“Kate Baker is a wizard at determining what is needed to bring your voice up to its optimum level,” glows La Tanya Hall, a jazz singer and backing vocalist for Seal and Steely Dan. “Her techniques are gentle yet highly effective. I have recommended many students to her and value her expertise.”

“Ask any working professional singer in NYC who they go to when they are in dire straits, and hands down, the first person they say is Kate Baker,” GRAMMY nominee Nicole Zuraitis says.

A vocal producer in New York and Los Angeles, Baker also teaches privately and is on the faculty of the New School University of Jazz and Contemporary Music. She has conducted master classes at major institutions throughout the United States and Europe, including co-leading many master classes with singing legends Sheila Jordan and Mark Murphy.

She soars as an educator — as her colleagues and students are quick to note.

“Kate Baker is my first call to teach a workshop or class,” declared the now 94-year-old jazz legend Sheila Jordan, whose career dates back to her friendship with Charlie Parker and beyond.

Currently, Baker is working with a new band that’s more Americana-based, with violinist Sara Caswell, aforementioned keyboardist Rachel Z, guitarist Paul Bollenback, bassist Jay Anderson, and drummer Tim Horner.

Baker is touring to celebrate the release of *Return to Shore* in a duo format with Bollenback, as well as the above Americana-styled ensemble.

Whatever Baker’s next offering will turn out to be, it will bear the marks of one of the most deeply intentional and emotionally fluent artists on the contemporary scene — one who’s arguably just getting started.