

Akiko Tsuruga

JAZZ ORGANIST

**She's "Sweet and Funky," she's "Cute and Bad".
A Composer. A Performer extraordinaire.**

The legendary Dr. Lonnie Smith describes her this way: "Akiko's playing is like watching a flower blooming, a bird spreading her wings in the music world. Akiko is here to stay."

Raised in Osaka, Japan, this talented musician began studying the organ at the age of three, at the famed Yamaha Music School. After discovering her passion for jazz very early on in her musical journey, Akiko launched her career immediately after graduating from the Osaka College of Music. While living and playing in Osaka, she had many opportunities to perform with world-renowned jazz musicians from the United States. Meeting Grady Tate, in particular, was a life-changing event for Akiko. ‘

After landing in the mecca for jazz, New York City, it didn't take long for Akiko to make her mark - It was during these early years that she had the great pleasure of sitting in, playing gigs, and eventually recording with jazz greats such as Frank Wess, Jimmy Cobb, Grady Tate and other top NY musicians. Her reputation ultimately drew attention of Lou Donaldson as he chose her in 2006 as his quartet's organist.

But it was the meeting of organ legend Dr. Lonnie Smith that proved to have the greatest impact on Akiko's musical development and career. He became an important mentor to Akiko, and she considers him her greatest influence. She flourished and continued to be a constant draw on the NY jazz scene.

Akiko has ten albums as a leader to her credit both the U.S. and Japan. Her debut album in the U.S., "Sweet and Funky", was selected as a "Best album of 2007" in DOWNBEAT Magazine. Her albums have constantly placed in the top ten on the National Radio Jazz Chart. Akiko also received "Swing Journal Rising Star Award" (Japan) in 2010, Hot House Magazine (NYC) Best Organist' in 2017 and the DOWNBEAT Magazine Critics Poll 2020 Rising Star Organ.

Akiko's newest excitement is a trio project features a jazz celebrity drummer, Jeff Hamilton, and a superb rising guitarist, Graham Dechter, and their first recording, "Equal Time" was released in June 2019. This thrilling trio has been touring around the US and Europe. Akiko continues to be a constant draw on the NY Jazz scene. And she will be joining The Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra for their 2022 European Tour.

Just take a listen to this dynamic performer, and I'm sure you will agree with the legendary Dr. Lonnie Smith - "Akiko is here to stay!"

Akiko Tsuruga website: www.akikojazz.com