

**Sofia Rei Koutsovitis**  
***Sube Azul***

Sofia Rei Koutsovitis is one of New York's most passionate, charismatic and inventive vocalists, but she brings more than the depth and fullness of a riveting voice to her second album, *Sube Azul*. She also serves as the album's composer, arranger, lyricist and — with bassist Jorge Roeder — producer. Following up on *Ojalá*, her polyglot and multilingual debut, she offers this time a collection of mostly original Spanish-language songs, building on a new set of growth experiences since moving to New York in 2005.

The result is a fully formed synthesis, reflecting Sofia's immersion in modern and progressive jazz while also responding to the pull of ancestry and the appeal of organic, pan-musical connections. A native of Buenos Aires, Sofia brings to bear the folkloric traditions of Argentina and its regional neighbors (Peru, Colombia, Uruguay), tying together diverse influences in a program full of complexity, melody and romance. The songs speak of heartbreak, individuality, special characters in Sofia's life, the challenges of life abroad. There are tributes to Argentina's *copleras* (female folkloric singers), and comments on what Sofia terms "the end of the utopia of the upcoming Latin American revolution." And yet even as *Sube Azul* spans the continents, it transcends its origins and gathers force as a self-contained narrative, more than the sum of its parts.

Throughout the 12 beautifully conceived tracks, we find Sofia conjuring a melodic purity that haunts even as it uplifts. She also harnesses the same vigor and self-possession she brings to the bandstand, where she often joins in as an instrumentalist, augmenting the power of her voice by playing percussion such as the *bombo legüero*, *cajita* and *cajón* when the moment demands. Her poise as a leader, too, is striking, and she certainly summons the best from the impressive roster on *Sube Azul*. The musicians hail from many countries, and along with chops and finesse, they bring to the date a palpable sense of commitment, as well as a broadmindedness instilled by richly varied musical and life experiences.

Just as *Sube Azul* reconciles Sofia's worlds, her North and South American homes, the album strikes other balances in turn: the polish and professionalism of a seasoned artist, but also the hunger and wide-eyed energy of youth; the technical demands of music conceived on the cutting edge, but also the simple, sensual qualities that can spring only from the heart.

David R. Adler

David R. Adler's work has appeared in *Time Out New York*, *Jazz Times*, *Global Rhythm*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer* and many other publications. (Visit [adlermusic.com](http://adlermusic.com) for more information.)