

## Jason Moran – All Rise: A Joyful Elegy For Fats Waller (2014)

Written by bluesever (Bogdan Marszałkowski)  
Thursday, 25 March 2021 10:53 -

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### Jason Moran – All Rise: A Joyful Elegy For Fats Waller (2014)



1 *Put Your Hands On It* 0:20 2 *Ain't Misbehavin'* 3:42 3 *Yacht Club Swing* 4:03 4 *Lulu's Back In Town* 2:38 5 *Two Sleepy People* 4:07 6 *The Joint Is Jumpin'* 5:10 7 *Honeysuckle Rose* 3:48 8 *Ain't Nobody's Business* 4:21 9 *Fat's Elegy* 1:46 10 *Handful Of Keys* 2:55 11 *Jitterbug Waltz* 6:13 12 *Sheik Of Araby / I Found A New Baby (Medley)* 5:00 Bass – Tarus Mateen Drums – Nasheet Waits Drums, Vocals – Charles Haynes Piano, Electric Piano [Wurlitzer, Rhodes] – Jason Moran Saxophone – Steve Lehman Trombone – Josh Roseman Trumpet, Vocals – Leron Thomas Vocals – Meshell Ndegeocello

Jason Moran is an artist who is not afraid to look back while constantly pressing forward. The 2010 MacArthur Fellow is a leading jazz pianist with moments of kinetic energy, agility, and sensitivity, the likes of his one-time teacher, the great Jaki Byard. Whether performing with varied ensembles and musicians, bringing new perspectives as the Artistic Director for Jazz at The Kennedy Center or combining freestyle jazz with live skateboarders in San Francisco, Moran's passion and capacity is having an impact in the way jazz is seen and heard.

*All Rise: A Joyful Elegy for Fats Waller* re-envisioning the music of the colorful pianist, singer, and entertainer who shook things up during the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920s and 1930s. Fats Waller's bright musical canvas is the perfect outlet for Moran's multicolored ideas; a boisterous amalgam of blues, jazz, and house music, reshaping famous Waller tunes like "Ain't Misbehavin'" and "The Joint Is Jumpin'." The recording harnesses Waller's infectious spirit caring less about the demarcation between musical genres while putting emphasis on Waller's incredible talents.

In collaboration with respected multi-genre musician/vocalist MeShell NdegeOcello, the release is an extension of ideas that came to fruition in 2011 through the Harlem Stage commissioned Fats Waller Dance Party. Ongoing dates at venues and universities found people eager to put

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their dance shoes on and Moran donning an oversized papier-mâché mask of Waller's head as the band provided hot grooves.

The signal that All Rise is anything but nostalgic arrives in the low pitched hip-hop processed voice in the funky "Put Your Hands on It" which sets up "Ain't Misbehavin'" with its snazzy horn arrangement, Moran jazzing it on Rhodes as Ndegeocello's sensual voice brings the song's famous lyrics. The musicians also include varied vocalists, members of Moran's Bandwagon trio—Taurus Mateen on electric bass and drummer Nasheet Waits, and a tight horn section with heightened contributions from trombonist Josh Roseman and trumpeter Leron Thomas.

The reworking of Waller's 1929 "Honeysuckle Rose" hits the sweet spot, the perfect combination of laid-back funkiness, smooth arranging and a soulful vamp. Though Waller was well known for his songwriting, Moran sheds light on his musicianship in "Lulu's Back in Town" with a riveting display of pianistic bravura and "Handful of Keys" where he adds his own virtuosic flair to Waller's well known stride-piano solo piece.

Moran proves once again that jazz is a transformative art-form in his unique arrangement of Waller's "Jitterbug Waltz." The tune is almost unrecognizable yet gorgeously reshaped as saxophonist Steve Lehman adds a rousing solo to Moran's touching version. Regardless of the era in which created, music still has the ability to move listeners in varied ways whether to sing, dance, or simply listen in a new way. ---Mark F. Turner, [allaboutjazz.com](http://allaboutjazz.com)

Yeah, All Rise: A Joyful Elegy for Fats Waller is a tribute to the great stride pianist, but in Jason Moran's hands, it's not what one would expect. This album isn't full of stride piano, but it is full of Fats Waller's larger persona as a performer. Waller mixed jokes and comic routines, and did whatever he could to connect with his audience in his act, and if his piano playing was the hinge, it sat on a door that opened straight to the dancefloor. This album had its beginnings when Moran was commissioned by the N.Y.C. performing arts venue Harlem Stage Gatehouse to create a tribute to Waller as part of its Harlem Jazz Shrines series. Moran came up with a unique combination of piano, vocal jazz, and dance that used Waller's signature songs as springboards. Collaborating with singer Meshell Ndegeocello, wearing a large papier-mâché mask of Waller's head created for him by Haitian artist Didier Civil, and adding interpretive dancers, Moran called his conceptual tribute The Fats Waller Dance Party, and All Rise is the studio-recorded rendition of the project. It's a stunning mix of piano jazz with moody, winsome

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late-night vocals, and it has plenty of get-up-and-go when it's time for it. If it doesn't sound much like Waller, one could imagine Waller would love it, and his signature songs are well represented, including "Ain't Misbehavin'," which Ndegeocello sings with a wistfully sultry edge, "The Joint Is Jumpin'," which is just that, a joyous and yet graceful romp, and a ethereal take on "Ain't Nobody's Business," which in Moran and Ndegeocello's hands becomes a dark, moody, and elegantly defiant statement in modal jazz. This set manages to be reverent to Waller's original recordings, but since facsimile was never the goal, it also manages to create a completely new veneer for them, and the end result is a marvelous tribute that still retains its own shape and coherency. ---Steve Leggett, allmusic.com

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