



## FR. STAN FORTUNA C.F.R.

A Roman Catholic priest ordained on December 8, 1990, is one of the eight founding members of the *Community of the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal* (an order established in the Archdiocese of New York under the jurisdiction of John Cardinal O'Connor). Prior to his conversion, Fr. Stan was a professional jazz musician who studied with the legendary *Lennie Tristano* (the 'father of improvisational jazz').

Fr. Stan often played sessions in New York City and the Tri-State area. He played gigs in some of the most prestigious venues in jazz such as Birdland, Lincoln Center and Town Hall and alongside the likes of Warne Marsh, Lee Konitz, Sal Mosca, Connie Crothers, Lennie Popkin, Carmen Leggio, Don Hahn, Tardo Hammer, Alvin Queen, Peter Scattaretico and Peter Prisco. With the latter two, he formed Scola Tristano, and the trio has produced a number of jazz albums – one of which was released by Universal Music Europe. Fr. Stan continues to perform with the trio today when time permits.

While studying to enter the priesthood, Fr. Stan was working in Spanish Harlem during his formation years. It was there that he encountered hip-hop firsthand in the street, a style he refers to as 'rhythm and rhyme', and was captivated by its improvisational nature. He heard people in the neighborhood 'rap' about their daily lives/struggles, and he soon learned how to integrate this phenomenon and technique into his own heart and music. In time and with the encouragement of his community, he developed an affinity for this art form and started using rap to reach out to the less fortunate and beyond.

The C.F.R.s adhere to an ascetic lifestyle in their friaries and live in impoverished areas around the world ministering to the needy. Fr. Stan has been involved with community development and the implementation of various social programs in his neighborhood of the South Bronx for over twenty five years when the religious order started in 1987. That same year Fr. Stan established his non-profit company Francesco Productions, mixing music and message.

Fr. Stan has since independently released over twenty one (21) CD's in various genres as well as DVDs and books. Assigned to the work of preaching full-time, Fr. Stan travels extensively across the country and around the world celebrating Mass, giving talks, and performing concerts with proceeds from bookings and sales going directly towards CFR hands-on work with poor and underprivileged families.

# Sara Hart



When she was pregnant with her first daughter, one of Sarah Hart's many creative collaborators brought her a set of juggling balls, and taught her how to use them. Between singing, songwriting, traveling, speaking and parenthood, Hart's friend figured she'd benefit from the skill.

"It was such a funny precursor to how it really looks," Hart says now, some 12 years later. "Because you do feel like you have to keep those balls up in the air, and if one of them drops, everything sort of falls apart underneath it."

Over years of balancing a family and multi-faceted musical career, Hart's become a seasoned and grateful juggler, with a list of accomplishments that attest to her commitment to keeping all those balls in the air.

Hart most recently has been in the studio working on her eleventh full-length recording, "And Lovely It Is". Sarah has been sitting in the producers chair for this collection of songs, along with co-producer Stephen Leiweke. This collection comes during a fruitful songwriting season for Hart. Amy Grant, Celtic Woman, Matt Maher, Laura Story, Audrey Assad and The Newsboys are among those who've recorded her songs, and Grant's recording of "Better Than a Hallelujah" earned Hart a Best Gospel Song Grammy nomination. She has also had several song placements in film and television, and her songs appear in hymnals all across the world.

Hart continues to hit the road steadily, too, helming concerts, keynoting and speaking, leading faith-focused women's, musician's and parish events, and performing from coast to coast and abroad. In October of 2013, Sarah was invited to perform for Pope Francis and a crowd of 150,000 in St. Peter's Square.

Sarah has of late seen the premiere of her first musical, Bernadette of Lourdes, based on the life of Saint Bernadette. The show has been performed in theaters and schools across the country. In 2017, she penned the music for the theater production of "Kaytek the Wizard", which is traveling nationally, and in 2018 she wrote the score for the animated work "Du Iz Tak", which most recently won the Odyssey Honor Award from the ALA. At home in Nashville, she also composes music and does voiceover work for the Tom Tichenor Children's Theater at the Nashville Public Library.

And avid writer, Sarah has also just published her fourth retreat book, "The Fruit of the Spirit", which she presents across the country. Hart's resume lists a lot of work, and a lot of different work -- but she sees a thread running through just about everything she does.

"I think it's all about life," Hart says. "It's all about faith and the human experience, and that's what allows people to relate. You have to be in touch with that experience as an artist; fearlessness in that place of honesty, and being able to write, speak and sing from it is, for me, the key."

In her travels, the reward is meeting people, sharing her stories, and having them share their own experiences, too. "To be able to do this work and offer a little bit of an oasis to people -- a little time to delve in and have fun and look deeper into their faith and desire more -- that's really rewarding to me. I'm incredibly grateful to meet such amazing folks, to have them be a part of my journey, and grateful for them allowing me to be a part of theirs."

As Hart navigates an increasingly busy time in her own journey, she's taken as many pointers as she's given. And her friends and collaborators continue to share important lessons, too: that juggling isn't a skill so much as a process, and that doing it successfully means you have to keep moving.



# Vallimar Jansen

BLESSED WITH AN EXTRAORDINARY VOICE, VALLIMAR JANSEN IS A HIGHLY REGARDED SINGER, COMPOSER AND RECORDING ARTIST. SHE IS EDUCATED AND EXPERIENCED AS A UNIVERSITY/COLLEGE PROFESSOR, A LEADER OF WORSHIP AND PRAYER AND A WORKSHOP PRESENTER AT CONFERENCES ACROSS THE UNITED STATES AND ABROAD.

Known especially for her work with contemporary Christian music, she sings a wide range of music, including spirituals and traditional, organ-based choral music. Vallimar began recording professionally in 2000, as a guest artist on a number of projects. In 2005, with her husband, she released her first solo CD, *You Gotta Move*.

Vallimar Jansen has a long history of singing sacred music, starting from the age of five and professionally since the age of six. She received most of her training in music and performance at Howard University in Washington, D.C., and she holds professional degrees in the Arts from California State University and The University of California. She has sung and toured professionally throughout the United States of America, St. Kitts, Jamaica, St. Maarten, Switzerland, France, Germany, Belgium, Italy, Scotland, Israel and Japan. She played the role of Beneatha, with the Broadway touring cast, in the European premier of *Raisin*. She went on to co-author a one-woman musical about the life of Ethel Waters that received a special commendation from the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.

Today, Vallimar tours regionally, nationally and internationally as an inspirational speaker, a storyteller, a psalmist, a song leader, a principal vocalist, and/or an emcee. You can hear Vallimar as a guest artist on a number of CDs, including: *Endless is Your Love*; *Make Us One*; *Clothed in Love*; *Christmas Child*; *Live It*; *That You May Have Life*; *Turn My Heart*; *Luke: The Feast of Life*; *Cross Culture*; *By Heart*, and *Another World*.

Vallimar and her husband, Frank, have CDs of their own: *Rejoice! A Christmas Journey* (AFW); *Get On Board* (AFW & TFP); *Stormy Weather: A Celebration of Ethel Waters* (AFW); *Akwaaba* (Spirit & Song); *Give God The Glory* (Spirit & Song); *Psalms From The Soul* (OCP); *Anointing* (Spirit & Song); *You Gotta Move* (Spirit & Song); *Cross Culture* (GIA), and *African American Sacred Songs* (GIA).

Vallimar also has a DVD series of her work as a storyteller entitled, *Inspired: Volume 1* and *Inspired: Volume 2*. This DVD series is a mere example of Vallimar's expertise as a professional director and actor. She performs inspirational material in both sacred and secular venues. She includes in her annual touring her one-woman musical on the life of renown African-American nun, Sr. Thea Bowman, FSPA and Vallimar's critically acclaimed one-woman musical on the sanctity of every human life, "*Sweet Mama Stringbean: A Celebration of Ethel Waters*." Both of these full-length musicals pay tribute to the legendary women they address.

Winners of two 2008 UNITY Awards for Best Gospel Album and Best Gospel Song, Vallimar and Frank have performed and/or collaborated with some of the best-known songwriters and musicians in Catholic music in the USA. The list includes: Tony Alonso, John Angotti, Steve Angrisano, Jaime Cortez, Bobby Fisher, Sarah Hart, Bob Hurd, Tom Kendzia, Matt Maher, Jesse Manibusan, Danielle Rose, Dan Schutte, Curtis Stephan, Christopher Walker, and many others.

Vallimar composes all her music with her husband, Frank. They live in southern California.



## **John Paul Von Arx**

I grew up in northern Illinois as the second of nine children (I have five sisters and three brothers). We had a family band when I was in high school and played oldies/classic country. Dad named it Scratch and Dent because he said, quite kindly, that our songs "had a lot of character." To this day, when I play covers I still pull numbers that our family used to play.

When I graduated from high school, I taught guitar lessons for a music store while taking classes at the local junior college. Soon I was looking to perform more regularly and joined the regionally acclaimed country band Back Country Roads as their lead guitar player. We toured throughout the Midwest, and during my two years and 220 shows with them I made life-long friends and gained valuable live performance experience.

When I transferred to Franciscan University in Steubenville, OH, to finish my undergraduate degree, I joined the Portland, OR, Christian rock band The Thirsting. I spent many of my weekends performing with them in CA, WA, and OR, and then we eventually did a bus tour of the USA, covering 35 states in four months.