

LAINIE COOKE – began her singing career at age 6 on radio in her home town of Minneapolis, on television at 11, and sang local dance bands during her high school days. After studying theater for two years at the University of Minnesota, in 1961 she moved to New York City at age 20, and amongst other things, became a successful as voice-over artist for commercials, documentaries and motion pictures that kept her busy for four decades. “I went to New York to find out what I could actually do with all of the stuff that was inside me,” she reflects. “I wasn’t sure what I wanted to be—a musical theater performer or a nightclub singer.” After working an office job for a period, she got fingerprinted for a cabaret card and played a few New York clubs, but upon doing her first out-of-town gig in Hartford, Connecticut, she developed an instant distaste for being on the road. Voice-over work, which allowed her to stay home in New York City, became her calling and kept her steadily employed for most of the next 40 years. “Voiceover during the day and as much music during the evening as I could make happen. but I had a day job where I used my voice every day,” says Cooke, who wound up serving on the board of directors of the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (AFTRA), eventually as the union’s National Recording Secretary. In 1973, Cooke began a three-and-a-half year adventure she calls “the very best and very worst times of my life” by joining her then-husband in running a 38-acre chicken farm in Jamaica that sold poultry and vegetables to hotels in nearby Montego Bay where she got to sing jazz once a month with an 8 piece band of local jazz musicians. Cooke moved to Los Angeles in 1979 and began singing in clubs with such top jazz men as pianist Dick Shreve and bassist Bob Maize but moved back to New York in 1983 and resumed doing voice-overs and singing in clubs and restaurants with Marvin Horne, guitar and Chris White on bass . She was bi-coastal for a period, and at 60 years old finally recorded her first CD, 2002’s Here’s to Life! on the Harlemwood label, with Shreve, Maize, and Paul Kreibach in LA. and New York

musicians, Tedd Firth, piano, bassist Cameron Brown, drummer Matt Wilson, Joey Morant trumpet and David Lahm piano completed the album. Her second CD, 2008's *It's Always You*, also on Harlemwood, also featured Firth, Brown, and Wilson, as well as saxophonist Joel Frahm, Marvin Horne guitar and Roland Barber trombone. Her third CD, *The Music Is the Magic*, produced by drummer and trumpeter Ralph Peterson and issued on his Onyx Productions label featured Peterson on drums and trumpet, Tedd Firth on piano, Luques Curtis on Bass, Tabari Lake, bass, Myron Walden, saxes Her CD's *Here's to Life*, *It's Always You* and *The Music is the Magic* caused critics to write "Listening to Lainie Cooke's third album, one is likely to wonder why a singer this talented is not better known." (Alex Henderson, *The New York City Jazz Record*) and another to suggest that "... her passionate performances should be heard at every opportunity," (Don Heckman, *International Review of Music*).

Wearing many hats, for the last 10 years she has been an Associate Producer and CFO at New Heritage Theatre Group the oldest not for profit black theater in New York. Before the pandemic her appearances in NYC included Cornelia St. Cafe, Kitano, Zinc Bar, Mezzrow, Birdland, and she has been a recipient of grants from the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council for the last 4 years. In 2018 she was asked to be a part of the Actors Fund Legacy Project and her life story can also be found there.

www.lainiecooke.com

<https://performingartslegacy.org/cookelainie/>