

## A Tête-à-Tête with the Emmy Nominee Actress: Rhonda Ross

Written by Kam Williams

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Singer-songwriter Rhonda Ross is an African Diasporic Woman of the World who studied at Brown University and who got an Emmy nomination for the soap opera *Another World*. Bilingual in French and English, and raising her son to be fluent in 4 languages, Rhonda Ross often connects with her audiences through their native tongues.

Her original music lives in the gap between Jazz, Neo-Soul, Funk and Gospel. Her lyrics live in the pause between life's most important questions and answers.

Mrs. Ross-Kendrick has the entire package -- as an entertainer, as a poet, and as a human

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being. She has great power on stage and her refreshingly personal and moving performances set her apart from other vocalists of her era.

Rhonda Ross' music flows straight from her essence and her bright spirit uplifts everyone in the room. With a crown of natural hair, she graces the stage with the gravitas and glamour of a modern-day queen. As the only child of Diana Ross and Motown Founder Berry Gordy, it has become evident that Mrs. Ross-Kendrick not only has the talent, but the significance to carry on her parents' legacy, all the while establishing her own unique musical destination.

While her music is based in classical jazz, it reflects influences from the entire spectrum of African diaspora sound. In 1994, she met, married and began a continual musical collaboration with jazz pianist and composer Rodney Kendrick.

Through her husband, Rhonda Ross commenced studying with the late jazz great Abbey Lincoln. "It was Abbey and Rodney who convinced me to begin my journey as a singer-songwriter," she says, "I primarily consider myself a storyteller and poet. I use my music to inspire and to uplift. And to teach people-- including myself." They collaborated on the live CD, *Rhonda Ross Live: Featuring Rodney Kendrick*.

Now a mother to a young son, Rhonda Ross' music has taken on the more mature stance of a woman "with the understanding and wisdom of a 40 year-old, but the passion and dream-seeking of a 20 year-old." Rhonda Ross-Kendrick is one of the rare artists today using her music to examine the society she lives in--from racism to sexism to homophobia to the need for self-love and spirituality. Mrs. Ross' songs look through all of it and ask: "In the midst of this, how can I still live the best life possible?"

Through Rhonda Ross' individual and creative expression, the legendary Ross influence continues to live on and expand. Rhonda Ross headlined one of President Obama's 2nd Inaugural Balls, and later performed to standing ovations and rave reviews at The Hollywood Bowl, the Montreal International Jazz Festival, Wolf Trap and The Theater at Madison Square Garden.

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