



## Motema Presents MELISSA ALDANA – VISIONS

*Visions is Aldana's first contribution that connects her work to the legacy of Latina artists, and is the musical representation of her explorations of self-identity and expression, inspired by & dedicated to Frida Kahlo*

Featuring **Melissa Aldana** tenor saxophone, **Sam Harris** (piano, Rhodes trk 5), **Pablo Menares** (bass),  
**Tommy Crane** (drums), **Joel Ross** (vibraphone, trks 1–4, 6, 7, 9 & 11)  
Available May 24, 2018

"Melissa knows the meaning of 'The Sound of Music.' Her tone is as beautiful as her personality... I am sure you will agree."

– **Jimmy Heath**

"... cultured, emotionally weighted, purposeful." – **The Boston Globe**

"... one of the more exciting young tenor saxophonists today" – **The New York Times**

"... savvy subversions to jazz's modern mainstream" – **JazzTimes**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** The glorious freedom to express your deepest self, your truest self, regardless of gender, age, or race, etc. is in abundance on saxophonist/composer/bandleader/educator **Melissa Aldana's** new recording, **Visions** (available on **Motema Music, May 24, 2019**). Inspired by and dedicated to the life and works of Frida Kahlo (who Aldana has loved since childhood), Aldana's music encapsulates bold, grand, inspiring strokes, improvisation/space, and the finest filigree, which combined, creates the richest of sonic tapestries, resonating with an avalanche of humanity. "Frida to me is an artist that embraces who she is through her art. She talks about ugliness, beauty, being a female, religion, politics, love affairs, sexuality and accepting herself as an individual. This is a big part of how she has inspired me to write this music," said Aldana.

Since beginning her life as a saxophonist at age six (first on alto, then upon hearing Sonny Rollins immediately switching to tenor), Aldana has loved to transcribe her heroes, people like Wayne Shorter, Michael Brecker (her father, also a saxophonist was a big fan of Steps Ahead), Bird and Cannonball Adderley. And, as a young painter she would try to copy the works of her two favorite artists, Frida Kahlo and Oswaldo Guayasamin from Ecuador. By her teens she was gigging, and was personally invited by Danilo Perez to play at the Panama Jazz Festival. Aldana graduated from Berklee in 2009 and moved to NYC to study with George Coleman. The saxophonist/composer recorded several albums, and then became the first female musician, and first South American musician, to win the Thelonious Monk International Jazz Saxophone Competition, prompting *The Washington Post* to describe her as representing, "a new sense of possibility and direction in jazz."



For the past two years, leading up to the recording of *Visions*, Aldana has been exploring this music through a variety of live contexts across the globe. The Melissa Aldana Quintet, beginning as mutual admirers of each other's playing, has transformed into a fearless, virtuosic ensemble of explorers, traversing through new musical landscapes that run the gamut from composed sections to those left open for extended solos and collective improvisation. Working informally as global ambassadors, the quintet has appeared at Thailand's International Jazz Day and the Hong Kong International Jazz Day Marathon. They have encouraged an open exchange of musical ideas and artistic inspiration on nearly every continent, having been featured in Madrid, Granada, Perth, Barcelona and So What's Next? Jazz Festivals. They have also appeared at mainstay NYC venues such as the Birdland, as well as emerging artist hotspots such as The Miller Theater at Columbia University. **Aldana recently led her quintet through explorations of "Visions: For Frida Kahlo," her original suite commissioned by The Jazz Gallery as part of its residency program for emerging artists. The suite premiered in June 2018 to immediate and ongoing enthusiasm, and now, Aldana happily and proudly presents *Visions*, her full-length album of new music inspired by Kahlo's life and works.**

The genesis of *Visions* took place as Aldana was pushing through some painful changes – as an artist and a young woman – in an effort to seek and refine her voice, and *raison d'être* as an artist. Frida Kahlo began to emerge as a pivotal figure in Aldana's work and quest for honest representation of self. Aldana elaborates, "this is my first direct contribution that connects my work to the legacy of Latina artists who have come before me, and helped create a pathway for my own expression. My hope is that this contribution is my first of many that will continue advancing that legacy. Though the challenges and conflicts represented are universal, I'm deliberately creating a parallel between my experiences as a female saxophone player surrounded by male peers in a male-dominated community and culture, and Kahlo's experiences as a female visual artist working to assert herself in a landscape dominated by men. *Visions* features musical interpretations of the cultural repression Kahlo railed against throughout her life, that is the same repression I'm confronting, sometimes painfully, as a Chilean woman growing up in a society governed by norms of shame, guilt and silence. In my calling as an artist, I will continue to explore these themes, and allow myself to be inspired by their significance."

The composition "**Visions**" is emblematic of the album as a whole. This movement is the musical representation and the sound of Aldana's explorations of self-identity that every woman and every artist faces, and includes feelings of pain, mistrust, exhilaration and relief. She explains, "experimenting both harmonically and rhythmically with moments of frantic movement interspersed with order and structure is one of the ways I conjure the messiness, struggles and heartbreaking contradictions present in these visions of identity and self-worth."

"**La Madrina**" explores the concept of the "Godmother" who appeared to Kahlo throughout her life and gave her the choice of either living with inescapable pain, due to childhood polio, a horrific bus accident, miscarriages, and gangrene (all brutally depicted in perhaps her most famous painting, "The Broken Column"), or dying and being at peace. This music addresses the subtle but important difference between the choices we actively make and the choices we're led to make, and how all these choices, for better or worse, come to create our individual narratives. "To capture the complexity of our life choices, Kahlo's struggles and my own personal challenges, I've written layers of tension and resolution into the music and



tightly arranged certain sections, but I've also allowed for sections of extended improvisation and possible spontaneous arranging within the form," explained Aldana.

"These compositions, and the rest of the music on *Visions*, deals with challenging questions that bubbled up while I was immersed in Kahlo's paintings, as well as researching her professional life and personal struggles – the latter of which I feel connected to almost on an intuitive level. In these compositions I aim to create different aesthetics and instrumental soundscapes that represent two specific forces in Kahlo's life that have had a direct, evolving impact on the direction of my music, as well as my own self-identity." –

**Melissa Aldana**

*Visions* was recorded by David Stoller on September 14 & 15, 2018 at The Samurai Hotel Recording Studio, Astoria, N.Y.

The album was mixed and mastered by David Stoller at The Samurai Hotel

**Cover art by Cecile McLorin Salvant**

Please Visit: [www.Motema.com](http://www.Motema.com), [www.MelissaAldana.net](http://www.MelissaAldana.net), [www.RedCatPublicity.com](http://www.RedCatPublicity.com)

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