

Somi Kakoma  
*[short bio]*

“A virtuosic performer in full command of her instrument and powers.” – *The New York Times*

Vocalist, composer, actor, and playwright Somi Kakoma is the daughter of immigrants from Uganda and Rwanda. A true renaissance woman, she is known in the jazz world simply as ‘Somi’. Her fifth studio album, *Zenzile: The Reimagination of Miriam Makeba*, is a companion project to the critically acclaimed original musical “Dreaming Zenzile” that Somi also wrote and starred in Off-Broadway as a tribute to the great South African singer and activist. Prior to *Zenzile* and at the height of the 2020 global lockdown, Somi released an unplanned live album called *Holy Room* featuring the Frankfurt Radio Big Band that ultimately earned her a 2021 Grammy® nomination for Best Jazz Vocal Album and made her the first African woman ever nominated in any of the Grammy® jazz categories.

Somi is a recipient of the 2023 Doris Duke Artist Award, two NAACP Image Awards for Best Vocal Jazz Album, and the inaugural Jazz Music Award for Best Vocal Performance. She is also a Soros Equality Fellow, a United States Artist Fellow, a TED Senior Fellow, a Sundance Theatre Fellow, and the founder of Salon Africana – a boutique cultural agency and record label. Recently, Somi made her Broadway debut in the title role of the critically acclaimed new play “Jaja’s African Hair Braiding” by Joceyln Bih.

Somi holds degrees in Cultural Anthropology and African Studies from University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, a Master’s degree in Performance Studies from Tisch School of the Arts at NYU, and is currently working on her PhD at Harvard University’s Department of Music. In her heart of hearts, she is an East African Midwestern girl who loves family, poetry, and freedom.  
[www.somimusic.com](http://www.somimusic.com)