

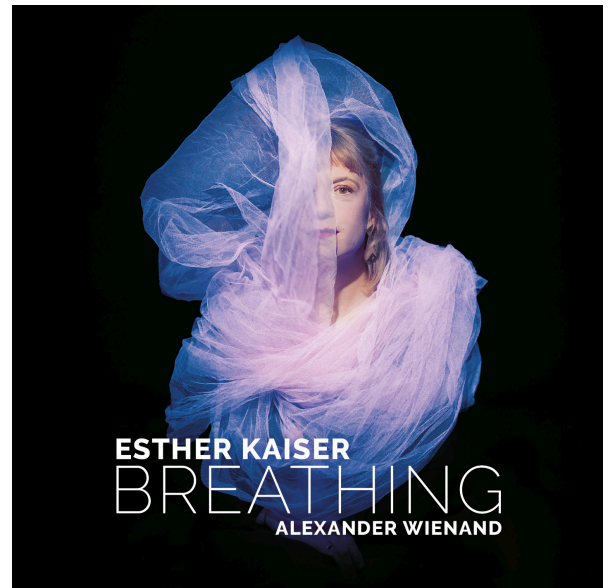
PRESS RELEASE

ESTHER KAISER – BREATHING

LABEL: Challenge Records
International

ALBUM RELEASE: 28. August 2026

1. Single *LEARNING TO BREATHE*,
17. Juli
2. Single *THE GIRL WHO IS STILL
STANDING*, 31. August
3. Single *SHE SAID*,
14. August



ESTHER KAISER – *BREATHING*: PULSE IN THE HEART OF JAZZ

Beethoven's prisoner choir sang about the freedom of breathing in his opera *Fidelio* when Leonore in men's clothes tried to free her husband, the political prisoner Florestan:

„Oh, the desire to breathe freely in the open air...“

Great writers dedicated works to breathing in its existential meaning. Everything that lives breathes and is in close interaction between life and death. Of freedom and bondage. Breath flows in and out, demanding vastness and space.

With this reflection on breathing as the most intimate human experience - one that connects people through language, movement and touch - Berlin-based jazz vocalist Esther Kaiser has dedicated her ninth album to *"Breathing"*. It will be released in August 2026 on the Dutch label Challenge Records International and was developed in artistic collaboration and creative resonance with pianist Alexander Wienand.

Esther Kaiser is enveloped by a fresh wind of ascribed attributes such as "voice artist" (Dresdner Neueste Nachrichten), "shaman of jazz" (Kieler Nachrichten), and "jazz poet" (Zitty Berlin). And Esther Kaiser takes responsibility where she is. Her albums breathe and are politically and socially charged, as jazz has always been. Her discography reads like a continuous fresh breeze in interaction with well-known protagonists. She made her debut in 2004 with the album *„Jazz Poems“* (Double Moon Records), as the first

artist in the prestigious “Next Generation” series by *Jazzthing* magazine. Her fifth album *"Learning how to listen"* with songs by singer and civil rights activist Abbey Lincoln marked another milestone. With *"Songs of Courage"*, she made a powerful statement of solidarity and humanity through collaborations with refugee musicians. Her penultimate album, *"Water"*, reflects a strong commitment to environmental issues.

Esther Kaiser is also a member of the German branch of the international network "Sisters in Jazz" and released the album „Moving Times“ in collaboration with Jazz guitarist Axel Fischbacher last year in 2025 on Challenge Records.

THE ALBUM

With BREATHING, Esther Kaiser provides a glimpse into the heart of jazz. It breathes in what is, and it feels and exhales that which creates space for more understanding, tolerance, peace, and freedom.

In BREATHING, the breath of many flows, and it finds resonance in primordial trust to oneself, in the wind, in an old house. It falters and does not flow for once in the piece "Gnome Scene".

THE SINGLES

The three singles symbolize the reflection of one's inner world in the outer world — both in a breathing interplay with one another.

"Learning to breathe" the first single, is also Kaiser's most recent composition on the album. She describes it as follows:

“ ...The song explores those challenging moments in life, when you feel you have to relearn walking, seeing, and even breathing. When breathing becomes difficult and you are just busy putting one step before the other. To continue on. To let go. In such letting go, you feel yourself in an existential way. You are, so to speak, thrown back on yourself and your own breath. And that can also be a big gift in the end. It is the life itself that breathes particularly deeply in you in such phases.”

The second single *"The Girl who is still standing"* reflects the other world of breath.

Esther Kaiser composed the song in 2022 during the "Woman Life Freedom" protests in Iran, focusing on the poem "I will greet the sun again" by Iranian poet and filmmaker Forugh Farrokhzad (1935-1967). The poem enters the piece from the middle of the partly instrumental piece in the form of a "vocalize" and culminates in the refrain with the sentence *"I will come with my hair"* like a refrain. The long, female hair, which in 2022 became a symbol of

solidarity with women in Iran worldwide, in the act of self-determined cutting. Also as a gesture of mourning and resistance. Toward the end of the piece, the poem is no longer sung but spoken, concluding with the line: *“The girl who is still standing.”*

The song has been conceptually realized in visual form as a music video by the Iranian visual artist Masoud Morgan.

The third single, *“She Said,”* once again takes up the theme of womanhood, which is given space throughout the album, and tells stories from different female perspectives and destinies. The title of this piece came to Esther even before the release of the film of the same name by Maria Schrader. Esther says: “I wanted to give women with different destinies a voice — and therefore ‘breath’ — in this song, and a poem by the Indian poet and literary professor Bijay Kant Dubey provides the thematic and emotional framework for all of these stories.”

THE ENSEMBLE

The interplay of lyrics and compositions by Esther Kaiser and pianist Alexander Wienand, alongside Kaiser’s own works, interwoven with elements of spoken word, invites listeners to become part of the act of breathing itself.

Together with her ensemble, initiated alongside pianist Alexander Wienand—featuring Tilmann Dehnhard (flute), Athina Kontou (bass), and Wienand (piano) - Esther shares the commitment and passion for the resonances of mutual breath in jazz. They have all found each other. All are united by a passion for jazz.

BIOGRAPHY

Since her debut with *Jazz Poems* in 2004, Esther Kaiser has played a significant role in shaping the German jazz scene as both a pioneer and a driving force.

Since 2014, she has also been a professor of voice (jazz, rock, and pop) at the Carl Maria von Weber University of Music in Dresden, where she is highly regarded for her innovative artistic and educational projects.

Esther Kaiser is an internationally sought-after jazz vocalist, with Berlin as the center of her artistic life.