

IQUA COLSON , Vocalist, Composer, Lyricist, Arts Administrator, Producer, Educator, has shared the stage with many of this era's great artists. She was named a Vocal Talent Deserving Wider Recognition by Downbeat Magazine and has been recognized by Billboard Magazine for distinguished achievement as a lyricist. The international media has praised her placing her in the company of some of our finest known vocal innovators and stylists including Betty Carter, Nina Simone, Sarah Vaughan and Abbey Lincoln.

A native of Chicago, Iqua met her future husband Adegoke Steve Colson when they were Piano Majors at the Northwestern University School of Music. As she was completing undergraduate studies at Chicago Musical College, she was voted into The Association for Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM) a musicians' collective that has influenced music internationally in the 20th and 21st Century. Steve was already a member. Iqua has headlined at some of the world's largest Jazz Festivals sharing the stage in the U.S. and overseas with many great artists, collaborating most frequently with her decorated pianist/composer husband Steve Colson. Iqua has six recordings, one of which "Hope for Love" (a collaborative project with Steve) was nominated for a Grammy. Iqua's work as an artist has been discussed/reviewed in many languages and can be found in countless periodicals, and in several books including: *Black Women & Music*, *More than the Blues* An Anthology of Essays/Interviews on several influential women in music including the great Leontyne Price. The Colsons' band from the early 80's was included in the prestigious Freedom, Rhythm and Sound Book / CD-LP compilation from Soul Jazz Records, London, UK with music icons such as Maurice White, John Coltrane, SunRa, and Mary Lou Williams. This collection/retrospective documented the influential and independent musicians who took control of their music in the late 60s and early 70s – the early roots of today's "indie" movement. The Colsons established their independent record label, Silver Sphinx, in 1979. The acclaimed exhibition, *Soul of a Nation*, featured the album cover and liner notes of *Triumph!* The exhibit opened 2017 at The Tate Modern in London and has toured extensively, including stops in the United States.

Iqua has been the architect of several projects successfully initiating and/or producing arts events and education projects in various U.S. cities, the Middle East and Europe. Iqua has a Masters of Public Administration/Arts Administration and regularly consults on projects that use the arts as a catalyst for educational and/or social change. Iqua believes art reflects society and are a necessary component in the push for Social Justice. Her projects include everything from neighborhood planning and arts classroom and venue design, to public art, production and arts curriculum

Iqua sat on the oversight committee for the New Jersey Department of Education working with teams in all arts disciplines as they wrote the first New Jersey Visual and Performing Arts Standards. She later helped construct and field test the Arts Census that now measures whether the goals for Arts Education put in place by the Department of Education are being properly implemented in every New Jersey school district.

Iqua's work with a team of colleagues brought rigorous sequential arts curriculum and recognition to the East Orange School District including the awarding of a Demonstration Project Grant. This award allowed East Orange to build the state of the art Cicely L. Tyson Community School of Performing & Fine Arts; a K-12 campus "smart school" and Performing Arts Center. Iqua worked as arts lead with the District Leadership Team and Ms. Tyson on the design and building of this campus while elevating arts education programs in all of the district's 22 schools. She retired as Supervisor of Visual & Performing Arts for the East Orange School District December 2021 where her vision and expertise led curriculum development, partnerships and special projects and many honors in the Arts for students in all of the district schools. In addition she worked with the Mayor's Office of Planning on several successful public art projects to enhance the community. Iqua implemented the very popular Summer Arts Academy – a Summer experience where the top of the line Arts Facility at Tyson Campus is opened up to all students in East Orange to come and study arts in a creative environment. Her accelerated specialized Arts Curriculum at the Tyson Campus and Whitney Houston Academy were lauded by the State and both Cicely L. Tyson Elementary and the Middle/High School were named a Model Schools in the Arts for New Jersey. Iqua has been recognized for this work with The Shirley Chisholm Award for Arts and Entertainment from former New Jersey Lt. Governor Sheila Oliver during her tenure as N.J. Speaker of the House, The Education Award from The Essex County Civics Club, The Donald M. Payne, Sr. Torchbearer for Education Award as well as several City, County and State Awards and Proclamations recognizing her leadership in the Arts and achievement as a performing artist.

In 2024, The Northwestern University Libraries purchased The Adegoke Steve Colson and Iqua Colson Archives including scores, compositions and artifacts relative to the first 50 years of their varied and prolific careers; an honor as they are now documented at Ade's alma-mater among one of the largest and most venerated music collections in the U.S., known for an unmatched strength in contemporary music.