

WOMEN IN JAZZ MEDIA

THE MAGAZINE



JULY 2022

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Welcome to our July 2022 edition of our magazine!

In this edition we celebrate some of the legends who have left us but continue to inspire us, the legends who are still more than going strong and as always, we celebrate the women continuing the legacy of jazz and ensuring the ever-evolving heart of it, is growing and supported. We explore some of the challenges faced both historically and currently and there is an underlying theme of resilience and strength throughout this magazine which organically developed through its creation.

I am always grateful for the trust gifted to us, that allows us to share the stories of these incredible women and it truly is a gift, as you will see.

As always, I would like to thank everyone involved in creating this magazine, both from the Women in Jazz Media team and our many guest contributors and partners. A special thank you is needed for the men that have been involved in not only this publication, but our work. The goal of an equal, diverse and safe jazz world can only be achieved with support from everyone, regardless of gender.

I do hope you enjoy this July edition of our magazine. To your left you will see a list of the 64 women you will find in this magazine. It is our biggest yet, but there is no rush:

explore, consider, enjoy and be inspired.

Fiona Ross

Founder
Women in Jazz Media

www.womeninjazzmedia.com

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Idit Shner

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Megumi Yonezawa

CONTRIBUTORS

THE WOMEN IN JAZZ MEDIA MAGAZINE TEAM

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OUR GUEST CONTRIBUTORS

Brad Stone
Nick Lea (Jazz Views)
Jo Harrop
Patricia Pascal
Tony Kofi
Bob Barkany
Emmanuelle Margarita
Mark Lord



Macy Gray by Monika S Jakubowska





Macy Gray by Monika S Jakubowska







CIARA MOSE



Photo by Valid Magazine

LIVING A COLOURFUL LIFE

Kim Cypher chats to bassist Ciara Moser about life in a World of Blindness and the challenges and wonders of a world of music without any visual distractions

In May this year I was lucky enough to see Panamanian Grammy Award-winning pianist, composer, educator and social activist Danilo Pérez performing at the Hay Festival...and what a truly stunning performance it was! Alongside an all-female line-up of Global Jazz Womxn from the prestigious Berklee Global Jazz Institute, Boston, USA featuring Patricia Zárate Pérez on alto saxophone, Francesca Remigi on drums and Ciara Moser on electric bass, the band united multiple musical cultures, demonstrating the power of music as a tool for the betterment of society and taking creativity to the highest level possible.

Within the first moments of the performance, I became intrigued and captivated by the young bassist Ciara Moser. She had a presence that drew me to her and fascinated me. She seemed totally absorbed within the music and in some kind of parallel world that blocked out external surroundings and was ALL about the music. She was something different, something unique and wow, could she play that bass!

Chatting with Ciara after the gig made me all the more intrigued to find out more...

Blind from birth, Ciara was born in Dublin to an Irish mother and Austrian father. Her parents saw the importance of introducing her to musical instruments from an early age as a way to provide the stimulation Ciara was unable to receive visually. Aged just two and a half, Ciara began learning the violin through the world-famous Suzuki method. Supported within a tight-knit family unit which extended to two brothers (one also born with the same visual genetic impairment), where music was very much in the foreground on a daily basis, Ciara was able to begin her

journey towards becoming a multi-instrumentalist before later focusing on her real true love, the bass guitar.

Graduating with a first-class Honours Degree from the University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna, Ciara was awarded a full scholarship for the 'Women's Performance Programme' at Berklee College of Music. As one of the 20 annual worldwide full scholarship recipients from the Berklee Global Jazz Institute, Ciara subsequently graduated from the program in December 2021 with a master's degree in jazz and contemporary music.

I caught up with this inspiring, young musician from her home in Boston to find out more about life in Ciara's world. It is truly fascinating...

Kim -The opening sentence on your website states:

"I can't read music in the visual sense, so I absorb the music directly and imprint it within."

How exactly do you do this?

Ciara - "The way I learn music is just by ear. Actually, that is the way it should go because the ear is the channel that we all absorb music through and also that makes music an extremely important tool for me because in music I don't have any disadvantages because I'm blind. You can't see music. So basically, I hear something and then I play it repeatedly until I have it memorized. It is honestly a better way than reading the whole thing from



Photo by Valid Magazine

sheet music because once I have the music memorized, I don't have to think about the notes I'm playing but actually I can think about the expression and how I can make it sound the best. I'm not influenced by visual distractions."

Do you think your audio sense and ability to absorb music is heightened because of your visual impairment?

"I wouldn't say it's heightened because of my visual impairment. I would say because of the visual impairment I've had to have certain training to adapt because it doesn't automatically adapt because I'm visually impaired. And then yes, I definitely have to compensate for not seeing or create new ways of getting around, no matter if it's in music or in daily life."

What other instruments do you play and what was it that ultimately drew you to the bass?

"I started with the violin. My parents believed it was important to expose me to as many things as possible. When I showed an interest in certain instruments, they gave me the opportunity to take lessons. I was very privileged because the music education system in Austria is incredible but I

also see that privilege as a mandate to help other blind people to get access to the music they want to have. I went on to play piano, recorder, Irish flute, viola, percussion, drums and singing is a large part of my life. I don't sing on stage but singing is a great tool, I really appreciate it. Around age fourteen I started to play electric bass because I felt really connected with that instrument. I really like the connection you create with the drums and being the foundation of the band."

I loved the creativity and freedom within the band's performance at the Hay Festival. You all seemed so relaxed and connected. Tell me more about Global Jazz Womxn.

"The Global Jazz Womxn is a project formed by Patricia Pérez for us to play at the Panama Jazz Festival in January this year. Patricia was our social-activism teacher at the Berklee Global Jazz Institute. There have always been a lot of struggles for women in jazz and Patricia wanted to put a message out there playing with women in Panama. For me, it was the first time I performed in an all-female band and I really felt we were working together. After we played at the Panama Jazz Festival, we were asked to go on tour with Danilo Pérez who also sees the importance of creating awareness for female jazz musicians because there are not a lot out there on the professional scene. I'm sure there will be more with this project in the future."



Photo by Fotolise

"It will be a great adventure."

It is great to see multiple musical cultures coming together with a strong message that music can heal the world. In what way do you think music can heal?

"I believe very strongly that music does heal. The strongest thing I notice it through is the connection I have with other people through music. Because nearly all my friends are musicians, I play with them and I connect with them through music. When we play, we don't remember that I'm blind. People even start giving me sheet music which is a compliment for me because it means they are seeing me as a 'normal' person on the same level who can contribute to the music."

Music is also the foundation of our life since ancient society. We don't need it like food but we don't know how life would be without music and we don't want to know that."

At age fourteen, your first band was called 'Blind Bratz' and since March 2020 you have been producing your own podcast called 'Blind. So What?' Do you feel an obligation to examine and clarify what daily life is like for a blind person and to encourage others not to be held back by disability?

"For me it is so hard and easy at the same time. The hard part is that I'm a blind person who has to include herself in a sighted society but the easy part is that I have a very supportive family. I see myself really supported but also really challenged. I have a lot of opportunities and a lot of doors opened to set more foundations for a more inclusive society. I want to really give back something to all the blind people who have so many struggles. Not everybody has it as I do. Without the support I couldn't have done it. I think I can change people's attitudes towards people with disability, allowing an easier path."

You have immersed yourself in a diverse and varied world of music which has resulted in a broad and eclectic range of performance styles. Do you have a favourite style/genre of music to perform?

"My personal favourites are funk, jazz and fusion. I grew up with them so I feel most familiar with them, but I see myself at home in a lot of styles. I also think my classical background helps me a lot. I can really relate to a lot of music through what I learnt on the violin more than what I learnt on the bass. I am very happy about my classical background so I am not just coming from a bass-player perspective."

Who are your biggest bass heroes?

"Definitely John Patitucci. I had the amazing opportunity to study with him at The Global Jazz Messenger. Then, I really love the style and choice of music of Hadrien Feraud. He plays mainly electric bass and I really relate to that. It is inspiring for me to see how he plays all the styles on electric bass. Then, of course I had a phase when I was really into Marcus Miller and Victor Wooten. I guess that's normal for electric bass players. I also really love what Pino Palladino does. He is an amazing player and in terms of 6-string bass playing I am really into Anthony Jackson especially what he did on the Michel Camilo Big Band recording 'Not Yet'. That has also been super-inspiring to me. But of course, there are a lot of others. Richard Bona is also a big inspiration for me."

In 2019 you released an album of original music – The Moser Family 'A Colourful Life' with family members and friends. I wonder if the title refers to the colourful mix of music you have experienced throughout your lifetime or an expression of your colourful life even though you can't visually see colour?

"I think it's all of it...it's a colourful life even though we can't see colours but our life is very colourful within our family, always doing a lot and exploring a lot, going on adventures. Our life is very colourful and also the music has a lot of facets to it."

Everything I have discovered about you indicates an incredible positive attitude towards life and an inner strength to avoid letting a disability get in your way. What advice can you give to anyone with a disability?

"The main advice I can give is to keep on going no matter what happens and always believe in yourself and what you want to do because you can do it no matter what."



Photo by Fotolise

What have been your musical highlights in life so far?

“Definitely performing with Danilo was a musical highlight for me this year. And then I would say the first time I played at a jam session in Austria. I had been learning the bass for around a year and I heard those super-professional musicians playing and my dad said I should get up and play. I remember it was the first experience playing with musicians who were way beyond my level and I remember that especially the relationship that I had with the drummers was really inspiring for me to consider the bass as my main instrument. It felt so good to play together with the drummer. I really felt inspired and motivated by having that feeling of playing and locking-in together.”

What music projects are you currently working on?

“I am working on my debut album called ‘Blind. So What!’ releasing in Spring 2023. It’s going to be my first recording project in my own right featuring my own compositions. The compositions are going to be about music and blindness so life as a blind musician. That is my next project.”

What are your dreams and aspirations for the future?

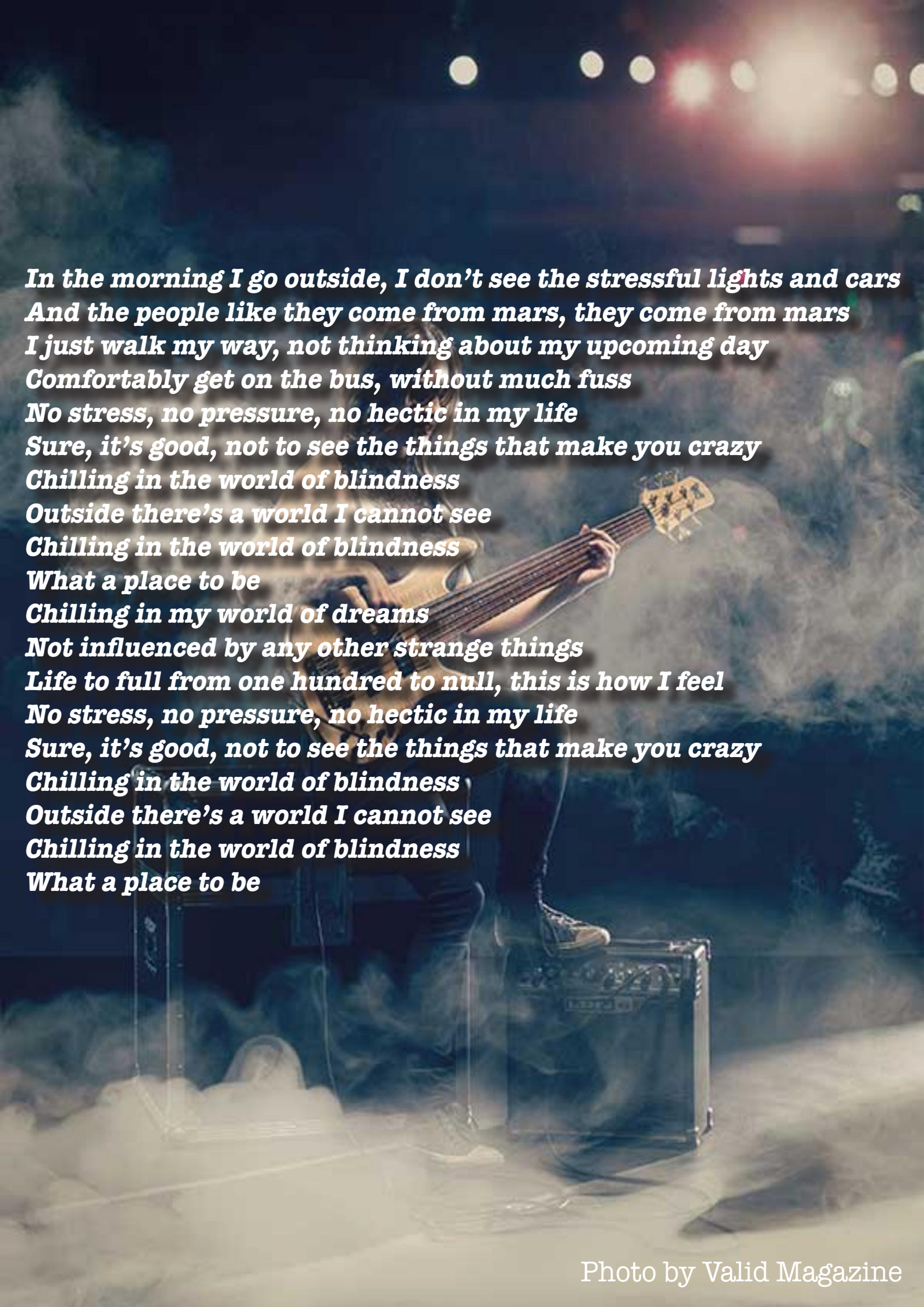
“The two main pillars for me are performing and educating. Educating people about blindness and disability but also educating in a bass and music perspective. I also want to release further albums. After my debut album I would like to release an album with only bass. I already have a few compositions for this and I want to keep releasing my own original compositions. Also, my dream is to perform and tour with big artists and play internationally. This has always been a dream of mine. I also want to grow in terms of playing bass. I want to become a better player and I want to live a nice, fulfilled and happy life.”

I have thoroughly enjoyed finding out more about this wonderful performer.

Ciara is a true inspiration to all, a very special performer who embraces life to the full, immerses herself in music, embraces her disability as a positive part of life rather than a disadvantage and ultimately leads the way for others to follow her example. Ciara Moser is most certainly living life to the full and in the most vibrant technicolour.

To follow and support Ciara, please click **here**

I would like to conclude with the lyrics from one of Ciara’s original compositions ‘Chilling in the World of Blindness’:

A musician is playing a bass guitar on a stage. The background is filled with smoke and stage lights, creating a hazy, atmospheric effect. The musician is wearing dark clothing and is positioned in the center of the frame. The text is overlaid on the image, following the same pattern as the previous block.

***In the morning I go outside, I don't see the stressful lights and cars
And the people like they come from mars, they come from mars
I just walk my way, not thinking about my upcoming day
Comfortably get on the bus, without much fuss
No stress, no pressure, no hectic in my life
Sure, it's good, not to see the things that make you crazy
Chilling in the world of blindness
Outside there's a world I cannot see
Chilling in the world of blindness
What a place to be
Chilling in my world of dreams
Not influenced by any other strange things
Life to full from one hundred to null, this is how I feel
No stress, no pressure, no hectic in my life
Sure, it's good, not to see the things that make you crazy
Chilling in the world of blindness
Outside there's a world I cannot see
Chilling in the world of blindness
What a place to be***

Dee Dee Bridgewater by Monika S Jakubowska





Dee Dee Bridgewater by Monika S Jakubowska







ALI AFFLECK



Photo courtesy of Jazz and Blues Festival



Photo courtesy of Jazz Scotland

ALI AFFLECK

A JAZZ SINGER SPEAKS ABOUT HER LIVED EXPERIENCE OF MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

BY FIONA MACTAGGART

Scotland is fortunate in having a considerable number of highly talented women jazz musicians. One of our most effervescently entertaining not to mention talented, is singer and early jazz historian Ali Affleck. Recently I caught up with Ali on Zoom to chat about her career and how she manages a busy working life whilst also suffering from in her own words, “a potpourri” of physical and mental health conditions. Some relevant links, for example to support services, are at the end of this article.

To start Ali shared a little about her background and career to date.

I've done several things in my life journey so far, including teaching English in Egypt, and living in Grenada in the Caribbean, studying Veterinary medicine at that time.

But what I've been doing for the past 15 years, the last 10 [of them] here in Scotland, is performing early Jazz and Blues, which includes subgenres that I would call Roots Jazz and Swing. My first band was with an American who was living here and we were doing what he called “early American pop music” - Tom Davis.

So, Tin Pan Alley stuff, some Blues, Pre-War Blues specifically.. I do a lot of work for the swing dancing, ‘cause I was a swing dancer myself.. And I notice that the stuff I choose is definitely informed by my personality and my life experiences. So, I’ve kind of come to the conclusion through some people who know me: they say that I’m a storyteller, a musical storyteller.

There is definitely a theatrical element to my personality, and I'm sure it does..[relate] to my ancestors. My grandmother and my great grandmother were both amateur actresses and my great grandmother was called ‘The Duchess’, because she threw the best parties in town!.. But going further back, Dame Nellie Melba is a relative... I definitely look a lot like her - if I dye my hair darker, I'm almost a dead ringer for her!

What many of Ali’s fans may not be aware of however, is that she lives with several debilitating physical health conditions, such as Fibromyalgia and Thyroiditis, as well as mental health conditions including Attention Deficit Disorder [ADD, a neuro-developmental disorder] and Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Ali reflected on how these health conditions first appeared.

When I was at High School in Dundee, I felt so different [from others], so I would sort of isolate myself, or I would be crying in class and the teacher would give me a hug and say “Oh, it’s just because you’re a teenager” and that was it! I had big trouble with coursework except for the stuff I loved, like Art.

..My story is not .. clear cut, it's been a real journey and I've had several erroneous diagnoses along the way. And even still, they're still not quite sure because I'm not a cookie-cut version. Well, I do have ADD.

I generally don't have the hyperactive part [of ADHD], although sometimes I can have pressured speech and I can be fidgety - not pronounced, and they think that may be more to do with my Hashimoto's [thyroiditis].. Basically, it's a precursor to hypothyroidism or hyperthyroidism..

I'm tired all the time from it.. Occasionally I have a day where I'm not tired.. I want to go and exercise, but I can't. I was referred to the chronic pain unit as well.. When I have a good day and I wake up and I feel like, great, so this must be where it feels like to be normal! And I try to do everything! So, I clean the house, I do all the work. Then the next day I can hardly move and the doctor said, this is exactly what happens.. even when you feel good you must pace yourself. Myself, I've always struggled with the concept of pacing, because I'd always been a very active person.

I also have ovary problems.. they send off the wrong signals.. And that affects everything from physical pain, exhaustion again, which then piggybacks on the other symptoms, and then it gives me mood swings as well, mostly .. depression. The doctor said it would be called the most extreme form of PMS and that affects me for a week.

Ali explained that taking medications for any of her conditions was complicated, as the medicines taken for different conditions might interact with each other and make her ill. She then described how her mental health conditions affect her currently.

My big problem at the moment is the exhaustion. And an obvious part of that does come from ADD.. it's like there's .. 100 conversations in my head and it's like having tabs on a computer open, right?

I can't ever stop it, and that's hard for people to understand. So, the way I control that is, I watch crap TV, because that's like bubble gum, it tunes me out. People ask: don't you listen to music to relax? No, I can't, because when I listen to music, I'm actively listening to the music, so that is work. So, it's a shame: my work has removed something that used to be a relaxing thing! It makes it very hard to organize gigs!

As well as ADD, Ali shared that she has been diagnosed with another mental health disorder:

Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. So, they [psychiatrists] realized it's.. to do with childhood trauma.. It was probably pushed on further by the ADD as well, because of the [ADD] 'churning'.



Photo by Lady Walker

This mixture of physical and mental health conditions can sometimes be a struggle for Ali to self-manage.

I have difficulty communicating in written forms sometimes, and I come across brash or even rude, or confusing, and that is a problem. [Ali later shared that she believes she may have some autism traits.]

Also, I have Social Anxiety; it's a potpourri of things! That's a more recent thing, I think, because when I started to get the proper diagnoses and proper help, for me the pendulum swung the other way. I thought, oh well, I better keep away from other people because I'm peculiar.. I can be a bit zany, I can go off down rabbit holes and people go, she's crazy or, you know, they put a label of their choosing on you.

So, I started to isolate .. but that's terrible because then you become more depressed.. The performing is fine, I've got no problem with the performing, the actual being on stage. That's when I do the chat, it's almost like putting on a jacket, a skin.. It's not masking per se; it's an ability to do something that makes people look at me in a nice way, in an approving way and I feel my responsibility. [Ali is a little tearful.]

Sorry, I do cry a lot and I'm doing it now - don't worry about that. It's emotional dysregulation [part of Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder] which just means some emotions are a bit stronger than others. I feel like I do a good job at making people feel happy and that makes me feel good because that's my purpose.

Ali shared various adaptive techniques that over the years she has found help in her work.

I'll try to look at just the last five years, because before that it was a slightly more chaotic, because I didn't know what was wrong with me.. it took me a long time to be comfortable with the labels [diagnoses]. But actually, once you sort of make friends with the label, then instead of seeing it a negative way, you can actually use it in a very positive way and you can start saying, well this is OK.

I do forget things a lot, so I have to have 'cheat sheets' sometimes for songs. I have a repertoire of about 300 songs, so I've got a few things that just remind me. It's better to have it if I need it, than to need it and not have it.. And it releases my mind for other things.

I also let certain people know, people I work with regularly...and actually, I'm starting to tell more people. You know, the main one - which is kind of fun and the guys I work with are really supportive - is that at times I go off on a tangent!

..so this is all on the autistic scale as well - where I assume everybody knows what I'm talking about! But Colin my trumpet player will say, "and there she goes!" Normally I can corral myself back. I've kind of made it a bit of a joke, I'd be a bit funny on the stage and I'll say, well, you learned more about turkeys than you ever wanted to know in your life!

But some of Ali's conditions can lead to highly distressing experiences for her.

[Once] I took a [medication] drug called Naproxen, it was for the Fibromyalgic pain, but what it did was it kind of made me even more hyperactive. It actually made me jittery and affected me as I was walking on

the stage. Yeah, I was open [with the band] about that.

Another time I was open [with the band] was one of the more frightening things that can happen to me: Dissociation. It hasn't happened in a while and normally I can sort of manage my way out of it now.. I was in The Jazz Bar[Edinburgh].

I was on the stage and I remember very distinctly Chris Grieve was on trombone and I was so dissociated I kept thinking: I'm just gonna run off the stage, just run out The Jazz Bar. And it was a cramped jazz bar and then I was saying to myself "You just have to get to the end of this phrase, and then the solos. And then you have to think about the next part". So, I was basically in my head: "Keep calm and you do this bit and then there'll be this bit. And then there'll be this bit".

And we got to the end of the gig and I said "Chris, I don't actually remember anything that happened in the past set. Was I saying really crazy stuff?" He said, "no no you were fine!" Because I was completely dissociated. He's a lovely guy, and he's got a very good understanding of mental health issues, so we had a nice little chat about it.

Ali spoke more about the debilitating nature of emotional dysregulation.

One of the things that I have to deal with every single day of my life, which is why I'm tired too, is I have to manage the way my emotions work. I have emotional dysregulation, which means that I may interpret something in the wrong way.

In the past, before I knew that I was a bit different, I would react to that. That wouldn't always end well, and it would become a problem. But part of that is I can have quite paranoid thoughts - I may think that I'm doing really badly or I may think that a person laughing, is laughing at me. But I won't react towards them, I react inwardly, and I just start to drop inside and I think, I should just quit and then the Niagara Falls. I'm terrible. Nobody likes me. All these terrible thoughts jumping like moles coming out the ground! Right? I have to manage that and it's very difficult.

I asked Ali how she manages these types of thoughts.

I sometimes say to myself: OK, I'll think about that later, let's park that at the side. And then I have to also keep saying to myself, it doesn't matter what other people do, it doesn't matter what other people think. It's basically like giving myself affirmations, so to speak. It can be very difficult especially in the past before I knew what was going on with me.



Photo courtesy of Jazz and Blues Festival

But Ali understands why it might be hard for people sometimes to realise that she is actually unwell.

People don't understand it either, because they see me get up and go on stage. People say: well, how can she be doing that?.. people don't see the other side, they don't see me being in the house for days - I do get slightly agoraphobic... So, they don't see that, that I was pacing and crying before I got in the car or bus [to] go to the gig. They don't see any of that, they just see me putting on a show.

Sometimes, including for a spell several years ago when her mood was very low, Ali has ‘self-medicated’.

In the past I also would occasionally overdo the alcohol.. Because coffee for me, it can help with my ADD. It actually can help me control/ keep on one train [of thought] which is amazing! Alcohol can calm me down superficially and make me feel like I could be social. But of course, that's bad, and then I get the hangovers..

Ali manages her mental health conditions mostly herself, with some health service support.

Some things I've come to understand more now, 'cause I see a psychiatrist twice or three times a year, just to catch up. It's not about talking about coping mechanisms. I did ask about Adderall [a US medication for ADD] but you can't get that over here, apparently.. it would be very useful for me, to have that occasionally.. So, I had to learn how to cope.

And one of the things that I've done, and again I've done this since I was a little girl and I didn't realize what it was, but it's a way of coping: it's sleeping, or not sleeping but having your eyes shut. And now ... I've come to realize through the therapy sessions, that it's a way, when I'm closing my eyes, I'm cutting off one stimulus and trying to find myself and sleep. The thing is, I probably overuse it as a coping mechanism, but it's better than hitting the bottle!

Ali has also started to sometimes offer a list of suggestions to her bandmates, to explain to them the circumstances in which she can function best.

I wrote a little list out which says ... I may do this, what it actually means, or what you can do. Part of [the list] is, if I cry, they should just ignore it, it's just I can't put a lid on the kettle. But if they start saying - Oh, are you OK?- it gets worse!

But that [crying], that seems to be the post traumatic thing and that's to do with childhood stuff which the psychiatrist explained. When you go through that as a child, your brain unfolds differently.

I think one of the things I've learned over the years is the ability to try and make jokes, or do something [to distract people]. You know, "what I should be is Italian, crying like this!"

And the other thing that I know I have to do - I enjoy being around people when I'm feeling good, but I know that I enjoy it when I know that I can go and be quiet and still by myself. That is essential for me, because otherwise I get over-stimulated and then it becomes anxiety.

Ali has an effective strategy for preventing build-up of her social anxiety.

Anybody who suffers from chronic pain or a mental health problem will relate to this: I'm the master of the white lie. "I've got a migraine", something that [is] an acceptable reason, rather than saying "actually right now I've got quite a lot of social anxiety and I need to be alone in a room". It's very much a face-saving thing. I don't want to make anyone uncomfortable and I don't want to be pressured, but I need to be alone.

Unfortunately, I do actually sometimes get migraines! So, two days later I'll get one and I'll think, oh, that's Karma!

I wondered if one of the positives of ADD was that, due to going off on so many tangents, Ali can be 'the life and soul of the party', and perhaps it is no surprise that she works in the entertainment industry.

I think so, it definitely is [a positive] now. Before, when I was not really open about this, it wasn't. But the fact that I embrace it and I roll with it, and I can make jokes about it..



Photo courtesy of Jazz and Blues Festival

And it does actually work very well with the particular time period and the type of music that I enjoy. Because going back to the roots of this stuff, you know, Ma Rainey for example, the Vaudevillian shows - they had cardboard boxes she used to jump out of. And you know this was very much part of the Vaudeville experience, these women would walk on stage in their diamonds and jewels and they would be the Queen of Sheba!

Another positive: Part of my ADD is the lying in bed and not being able to sleep, and sometimes my best thoughts come to me in the wee small hours.. I've learned to write things down, because [otherwise] in the morning they're gone.

I wondered if Ali had anything else she wished to share and perhaps any suggestions for people who may relate to some of the issues she has.

I guess what I say is, for me this is a permanent problem. Oh, I should probably try not use the word 'problem'. I'm just different. It's permanent, it's me. It's the way my brain is. It's a permanent thing. So, I have to accept it and I have to work with it.

I do get very angry sometimes, at myself for being different. I think, why can't I go off and have coffee and do this, today? Why do I have to stay in the house and all this stuff [happen]?

But I'm learning to accept it and something from a teacher I had in California - she was talking about being exhausted. Her name is Terry Ovalo. She's an amazing teacher, very controversial, taught psychology, international relations. She goes: "Well, I woke up and I had breakfast in bed and then I realized I wasn't going to get out of bed all day. So, I brought all my books through there and started to do work, but you know what? If I'm gonna be doing nothing, I'm gonna accept that and I'm allowing myself that".

So those words 20 years ago resonate now. The world is not going to fall apart if I put this off 'till tomorrow. I should be doing this or that: no, do something completely different and forget all about it. Write it down. For tomorrow, you worry about this, but today we do not.

And if you're on a merry-go-round like me, I think it's important to try and be kind to yourself. And not over-analyse, 'cause for me, part of the thing I would do is, if I had a few days in a row feeling good, I would start getting a foreboding. Like oh, when are the wheels going to fall off? .. But instead of almost anticipating that, I just try to be in the moment - so Mindfulness is something I'm trying to do, but with the ADD it's very hard to do.

I also realized that I get over-stimulated by certain things, so I put up a - it was my granny's - ancient old gorgeous Art deco curtain, to hide the book cases, so it's away from my eyes. So, I can then focus on the job without looking at it!

Also, I use Alexa to remind me .. to prepare folders now, and you have one hour to get ready, you have half an hour to get ready. So, Alexa is talking to me throughout the day! .. In my condition it gives me things: pigeon-holes, you know, I can put things firmly in the wall. Right? It helps me structure my life.

I think [in summary]: accepting things, learning ways of coping that work for you, ..book reading and finding out about other things, seeing what can work with you, being open with people that you work with, and just trying to get through each day.

Pursuing a musical career whilst managing these physical and mental health conditions is clearly exhausting and Ali has recently come up with an idea for something she thinks might help with her career.

So, I applied to a grant and I really hope I get it! It's to help people who are neurodiverse with their careers, because I've identified the things that have absolutely hindered my career and prevented me going to the place I should be at.. part of it is my communication skills, and my ability to strategize which requires focus. So, I clearly see that I could use some help in that department, maybe from a type of manager or .. promotor to take over the reins when dealing with venue people, so that I don't inadvertently turn people off because of my strange way of communicating. I was thinking of including this in emails. Just putting in a note that says - I'm neurodiverse and sometimes my written communications are a challenge for me. Also, I don't like the phone, the disembodied voice. I like to see someone, I can relax 'cause [I can see the] body language.

WiJM would like to thank Ali for sharing her story with us. Later this year Ali hopes to start a video blog, with the aim of further sharing how her conditions impact her working life and what she does to manage them.

Fiona is an amateur musician (piano and drum kit) who writes about and champions Scottish Jazz. Fiona previously worked for over 3 decades mostly in Psychiatry in Scotland, England and Australia. Her particular interests were Child and family mental health, Looked after and accommodated children and young people, and assessing and working with people who lived with complex mixtures of both Neuro-developmental disorders and Trauma.



Should any of the above issues resonate for anyone, here follows a list of links to mental health supports including some self- help materials.

For links, please click here

(a) Mental health links.

Mind offers information and advice

Zero Suicide Alliance provides “a range of awareness training options, which provide a better understanding of the signs to look out for and the skills required to approach someone who is struggling, whether that be through social isolation or suicidal thoughts”.

The Samaritans for a 24 hours per day Helpline.

Mental Health First Aid England. This has lots of resources, including an Address Your Stress Toolkit.

Every Mind Matters | One You - NHS Lots of advice here.

Headspace: for a short meditation.

No Panic Lots of advice especially about anxiety/ stress, and a daytime helpline.

Anxiety UK Support for those “with anxiety, stress, anxiety-based depression or a phobia.”

Give us A Shout This is a 24 hour per day “text support service” which can help people “with issues such as anxiety, depression, panic attacks, self-harm, suicidal thoughts, abuse, relationship problems, bullying”.

BBC Health The aim of this BBC site is to help us spot is someone we know is struggling.

Help for Hoarders offers support including self-help videos.

Sober 21 is a free resource for musicians who want to begin the journey, or are new to the path of getting clean and sober from drugs and alcohol.

(b) Specifically for musicians (thanks to the Musicians’ Union for some of these).

Music Minds Matter have a 24 hour a day helpline (run by Help Musicians UK).

Music Support has a daytime helpline for mental health and addiction support.

Help Musicians is an independent charity for professional musicians, from starting out to retirement.

British Association for performing Arts Medicine (BAPAM) offer health and wellbeing services to those working in the performing arts.

MITC also has a free self-help guide.

The Musicians’ Union has a useful NHS-approved mental health App.

The Royal Society of Musicians of Great Britain (RSMGB) can connect up musicians with each other.

Music Support for a weekly support group for those in any 12 step fellowship

The Young Freelancer’s Guide to Mental Health and the Music Industry.

Music Industry Therapists

BAATN has a directory of Counsellors and Psychotherapists of Black, African, Asian and Caribbean Heritage in the UK

BRIGHTER TO A TRIBUTE TO THE ARTS BY KIM CYPHER

Calling **ALL** creatives working in The Arts -

Musicians, Venues, Festivals, Photographers, Sound Engineers, Backstage Crew, Song-writers ...anyone working creatively in The Performance Arts...

It's time to celebrate and share what YOU do!

UK saxophonist, vocalist & composer **Kim Cypher** presents a brand-new project 'Brighter Tomorrow' - A Tribute to The Arts, in celebration of **ALL** the amazing, creative people who work in The Arts as we finally head towards a **BRIGHTER TOMORROW**.

Following the covid-19 pandemic and the huge united effort by The Arts to remain true to their professions, Kim would like to celebrate this wonderful Arts industry driven by creativity, passion, commitment, compassion, willpower and sheer determination. There are so many un-sung heroes dedicated and devoted to their work which contributes to a real sanctuary of positivity in our world.

'Brighter Tomorrow' launched on 8th July at London's Crazy Coqs and the project features a selection of Kim's new original music born out of lockdown including a video performance with one of the UK's greatest jazz performers Liane Carroll at London's 606 Club plus a celebration of venues and fellow creative artists through a portfolio of photography by photographers Ron Milsom and Tatiana Gorilovsky.

Now the project needs **YOU**! It's time to shine a spotlight on **YOUR** creativity, any creative performance projects you are part of or any you would like to celebrate. Just share on social networks and fill the airwaves with your creative posts using the hashtag **#brightertomorrowforthearts**

It will create a wonderful collection of creative celebration, some of which will be included and featured in a forthcoming online magazine devoted to the whole project.

So, let's get sharing and celebrating a **BRIGHTER TOMORROW** for The Arts.

Here's to you...you are **ALL** amazing!

MORROW

A dramatic photograph of a stage. A large, bright spotlight beam from above illuminates a microphone on a stand. The microphone is positioned in the lower-left foreground. The rest of the stage and the background are in deep shadow, creating a high-contrast, moody atmosphere. The word "MORROW" is superimposed at the top in a stylized, metallic font.

#brightertomorrowforthearts

Spotlight photo by Ron Milsom at the stunning
Everyman Theatre in Cheltenham



Abbie Finn and Emma Rawicz by Monika S Jakubowska



MAXINE GORDON



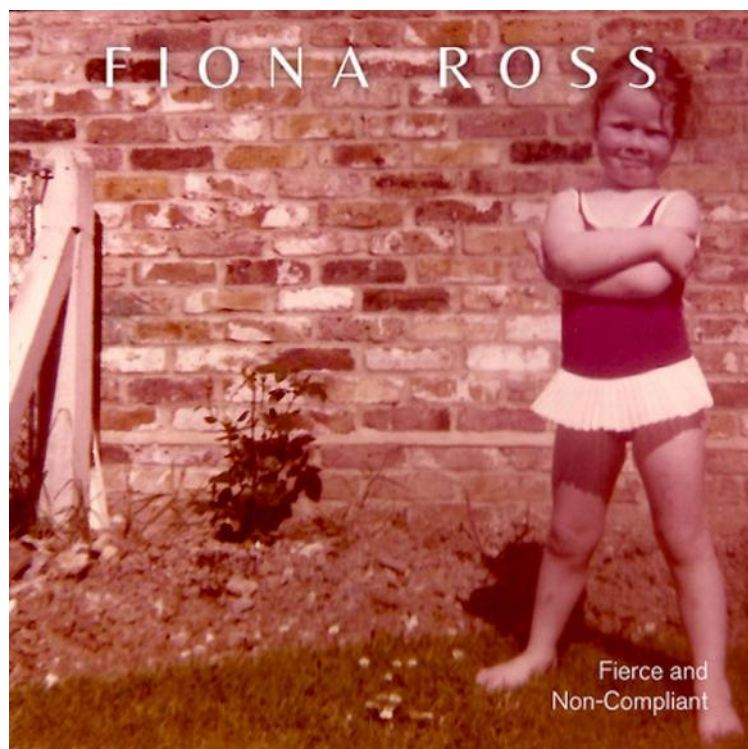


Maxine Gordon by Bob Barkany

June 4, 2022
Jazz Café Posk, London

by Maxine Gordon

There are moments in a lifetime that seem like a dream and that evening of June 4, 2022, in London at the Jazz Café Posk was one of them. The unflinching and brilliant and formidable Fiona Ross had decided to have an evening tribute to me. When she gets an idea, there is no stopping her. Look at her work with Women in Jazz Media, look at and listen to her album *Fierce and Non-Compliant*. The title says so much about the little girl who became the woman she is. I have known other musicians who had ideas and the best thing to do is to get out of the way and let them go with it. Fiona is one of those musicians. She is talented on so many levels and passionate about everything she does as well as being kind and determined. She found the perfect venue with the perfect vibe and hired the best musicians to honor my work on *Dexter Gordon* and then the four women who are the subject of my next book, *Quartette: Stories from the Lives of Maxine Sullivan, Velma Middleton, Melba Liston, and Shirley Scott*.



Fiona sent me the address and I arrived early for the sound check which is something I always like to do so that I can hear the musicians preparing and see them before they hit the stage. The energy in the room was palpable. So much talent with such a great attitude about playing and performing. I sat and watched and listened and then we went to dinner (a Polish meal with the musicians seated around a large table). This follows the “feed the musician’s rule.” Everyone plays better with a good meal.





We sat around a big table and ordered from the menu with lots of questions. I had beet soup and potato pancakes. The group of very young musicians had an escort, and she was watching them closely. They even went to the ladies' room with an escort. I am sure the parents would be pleased to know they were well protected. The evening began with that young group of girls named J-Steps with Hannah Horton as the leader and teacher. This speaks well for the future of Jazz and for young women who want to play the music.

'We were so excited to be asked to play as a sextet at this amazing event. Many of us knew and had played his songs. We enjoyed the creative process of choosing and arranging the chosen pieces with our director Hannah Horton. We still can't quite believe we got to meet and play for his wonderful wife Maxine and at such a fancy jazz club' J Steps

Top: Hannah Horton

Top Right: Megan on Drums

Bottom Right: Tabby on Bass

All photos by Bob Barkany







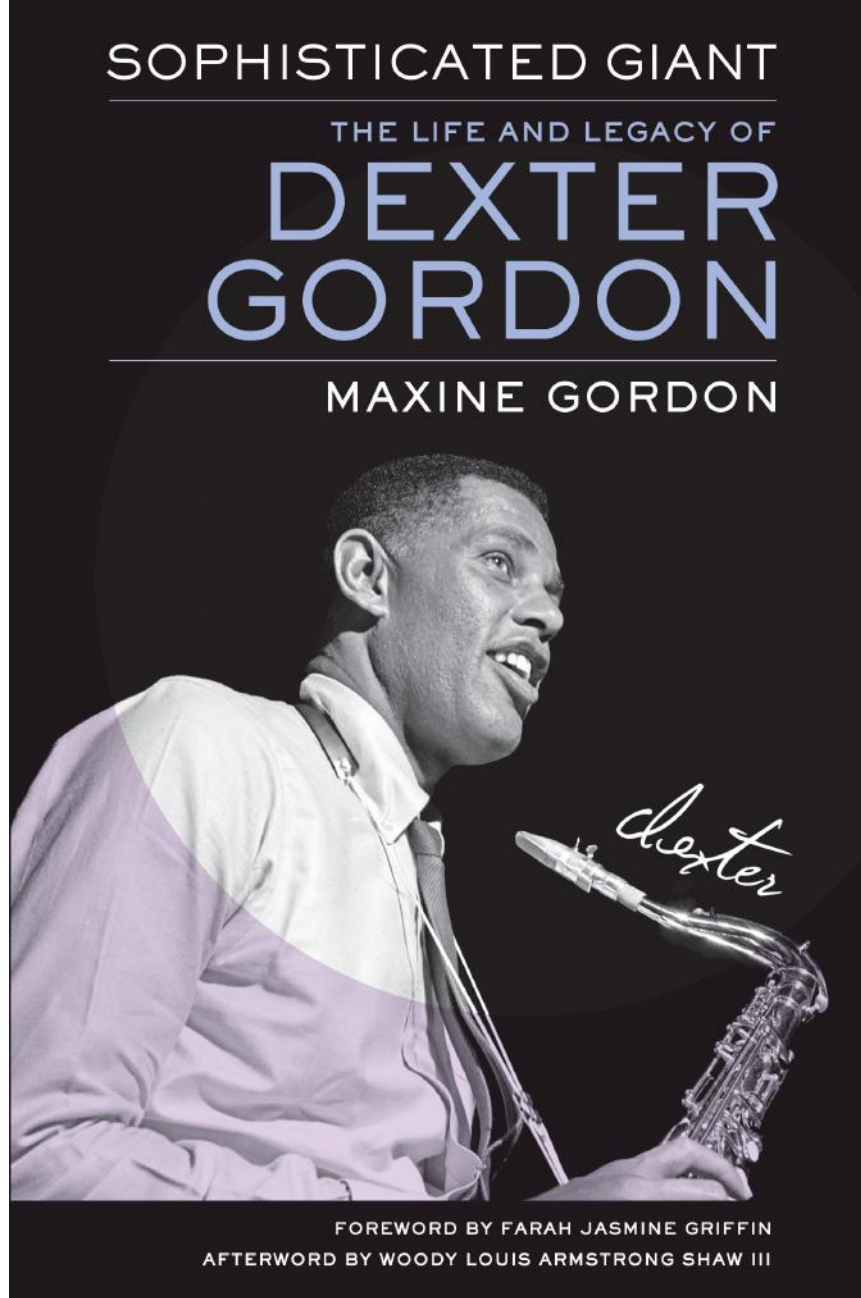


Derek Daley: Bass
Wendy Kirkland: Piano
Abbie Finn: Drums
Photos by Monika S Jakubowska

A gig is only as good as the rhythm section, and this was an exceptional one. They played at a top level for all the soloists and seemed to inspire everyone with their talent. I never doubted that the musicians would be good, but I was delighted with the level of players and can't thank them enough. I have traveled far and wide and I know there is talent everywhere playing Jazz, but these musicians were excellent, and it was so good to hear this live music after all this lockdown time.

The evening continued with two exceptional tenor players, Emma Rawicz and Tony Kofi. Both of them are inspired by Dexter Gordon but brought their own sensibilities to the music. They were so pleased to be there, and Fiona had chosen the perfect musicians to play for Dexter. The audience was enthusiastic and moved by the musicians as was I. Tony Kofi was especially moved to play for Dexter and got emotional when talking about him to me. This is what I like to call "a Dexter moment."

'For me, two of the biggest highlights of my year was to honor Dexter Gordon at an all star concert at Café Posk in London, and the next was meeting his widow Maxine Gordon. Dexter had one of the most recognizable voices in jazz, you can do blindfold test and know who's playing by the first note. Then to have the most wonderful conversation and a signed copy from Maxine Gordon's Sophisticated Giant put me on such a high, I felt like a child in a candy store, an amazing and knowledgeable woman whom I couldn't take away my attention away from whenever she spoke, an insight to information that I can only dream about and wish I was born in that era, it was such an emotional moment Dexter moment which I will treasure and draw inspiration from. My first thought was you don't have to be a jazz musician to be jazz royalty, Maxine Gordon is jazz royalty' Tony Kofi



Tony Kofi by Monika S Jakubowska





Emma Rawicz by Monika S Jakubowska





After a session with me and Fiona talking about my Dexter biography and my next project on the four women musicians, there was a break and then an interpretation of the music of the four women of Quartette. Fiona told the story of how we met in Paris and how she was determined to do this event when the pandemic was over and we could be together in London. There we were just as she had dreamt.

I was already thinking about the book tour for the book that is not yet completed and how I would want those musicians to tour with the new book. There was a remarkable trombone player who channeled Melba Liston's playing and feeling named Laura Impallomeni who played with saxophonist Hannah Horton who played baritone as well as tenor and alto, Hannah Horton was also the leader and teacher of J Steps. There was a Shirley Scott tribute by Wendy Kirkland which brought tears to my eyes.



Top: Maxine Gordon and Fiona Ross
Bottom: Laura Impallomeni and Hannah Horton
Right: Vimala Rowe
All photos by Bob Barkany





If there was a moment in the evening where time stopped and the room grew silent (one of those rare moments in a Jazz club), it would have had to have been when Vimala Rowe took to the stage to do her tribute to Velma Middleton. She spoke to the audience and said that her birth name was also Velma and that her birth mother was from Freetown, Sierra Leone where Velma had died in 1961 and could possibly have been to her last concert there. This was so moving to think about and then she sang with the most beautiful voice and so much feeling. No one will ever forget that moment. Her tribute to both Maxine Sullivan and Velma Middleton needs to be on her next album.

There are so many people to thank when an event is this successful and well organized and where the end result is an evening that we will all remember. I am sure we can have a reunion concert next year and for many years to come.

Thank you to Tomasz Furmanek and everyone at Jazz Cafe Posk for their hospitality. To all the WIJM team in front and behind the scenes Diana Torti, Kim Cypher, Monika S. Jakubowska, Charlotte Keeffe, and Esther Bennett. Thanks for the extraordinary photos by Monika S. Jakubowska (and the Fiona and Maxine by Bob Barkany and the group photo by Tony Barnes).



Laura Impallomeni by Mark Lord Photography



LAURA IMPALLOMENI AND MELBA LISTON

Laura Impallomeni studied Jazz Trombone at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance during which she regularly performed in venues such as Ronnie Scott's with Mark Lockheart's Contemporary Big Band, and various other smaller jazz ensembles. Laura plays in a plethora of other musical projects and genres including 'Barnacles', an experimental jazz quintet, and Latin Jazz ensemble 'The Voodoo Love Orchestra'. She has also toured with the renowned 'Giffords Circus' and runs an 11-piece Afro-Jazz band 'Yamäya' that recently reached the final 8 bands (out of 5600 entries) in the Glastonbury emerging talent competition. Laura is certainly one to watch and she has just received the Arts Council England 'Develop Your Creative Practice' grant to explore her own contemporary jazz compositions and to continue studying under various renowned UK trombonists and composers.

We asked trumpeter/flugelhorn player Charlotte Keefe to put some questions to some of the artists performing, about their process, how they prepared and how the artists they are representing have influenced their work. In this article, Charlotte talks to the brilliant trombonist Laura Impallomeni about her Melba Liston performance.



Photo by Tatiana Gorilovsky

Please briefly introduce yourselves to us and share what really inspires you about the artist you represented and therefore the music you played as part of this special night?

I am Laura (Lao-ra) Impallomeni, a London based female trombonist, and I had the privilege of representing the mighty Melba Liston during this special concert! There are so many things that inspire me about Melba's musical skills and style. She was a phenomenal trombone player, jazz improviser, arranger and composer. Besides from her own wonderful repertoire, she is reported to have also composed as a "ghost writer" for many renowned artists. Many of the arrangements found in the Gillespie, Jones and Weston repertoires were accomplished by Melba. I've even heard that she arranged music for Bob Marley whilst living in Jamaica!

Music is still very much a male dominated world, but back then it was even more so! Melba seems to me to have been a truly courageous, resilient and ground-breaking woman. I find her character truly inspiring! She was the first female trombonist to play in the big bands of the 1940s and 1960s. She was also the first female jazz trombonist to play in many other smaller jazz ensembles.

She was known for being nervous when she was asked to take solos, but with encouragement she became more comfortable. I love her improvisational style! She became a featured voice in many bands and toured with artists such as Count Basie and Billie Holiday.

I feel a real affinity to Melba, and these feelings she supposedly felt around soloing in her early career. My experience of studying jazz at a conservatoire and playing jazz in general has been very male-dominated.

There is a primal, sometimes macho element to solo-ing, that at times feels like a sort of Darwinian display of ones 'assets'. Whilst I deeply respect and value musical virtuosity and the discipline that lays behind it, I don't want to buy into the competitive alpha element that can sometimes emerge in very male jazz scenes. So, for women, I think we have to find a way to healthily and intelligently navigate that energy that can infiltrate the music. Perhaps Melba's nerves were partly born from a similar experience, given she was the only woman in the majority of her musical projects. It is inspiring that she acclimatised to improvising, and not only overcame these nerves, but came out as a strong and recognisable improvisational voice!



Laura Impallomeni by Bob Barkany

How have you approached learning someone else's voice whilst maintaining your own powerful voice?

I have spent a lot of time attentively and actively listening to Melba's repertoire. I have also transcribed big chunks of her solos. Whilst I have tried my best to assimilate aspects of her sound and language, I trust that my own musical voice will still prevail, because no matter how hard we try, I believe that we always sound like ourselves! We can transcribe phrases and feel, but at the end of the day it will be my breath, vibration and presence that comes through the horn.

Do you have a favourite song, piece and/or a story about the artist that you'd like to share with us?

There are so many tunes of Melba's that I love, but perhaps my favourite is 'The Trolley Song', as it is such a fantastically angular and wonky piece of music! However, I sadly couldn't play it at this concert, as we didn't have enough musicians in the ensemble to do justice to this fantastic piece of music that was arranged for a much larger band. Another personal favourite that we did play is 'Insomnia', a moody minor piece that moves between a swing and rhumba feel.

Melba articulated the problems of being a female on the road in a 'male' profession; "There's those natural problems on the road, the female problems, the lodging problems, the laundry, and all those kind of things to try to keep yourself together, problems that the guys don't have to go through". She also recounted the struggles she experienced as an African American woman, which affected her musical career.

One can imagine just how challenging it was for her to pursue a career as a jazz musician in that even more racist and patriarchal era. It has been said that due to these gender and racial inequalities, she continually had to prove her credentials in order to gain employment as a musician, composer and arranger. She was not paid equally and was denied access to larger opportunities. But she kept playing and composing despite this significantly disadvantageous context, and she did it with tremendous success!

She was evidently a force to be reckoned with! She strikes me as a powerhouse of musical talent, drive and determination. One that carved out a path that many female musicians and composers have since followed.



Melba Liston at the North Sea Jazz Festival in 1982, by Jan Scheffner.



Laura Impallomeni and Hannah Horton by Bob Barkany





HANNAH HORTON, KIM CYPHER AND DEXTER GORDON

Having studied at the prestigious Junior Guildhall School of Music and Trinity College of Music, Hannah is turning heads in the UK jazz scene following release of her 2nd album 'Inside Out' in September 2021, with a sell-out launch gig at prestigious 606 Club in London. Hannah performed a selection of Dexter Gordon tracks on 4th June and we asked Kim Cypher to talk to Hannah about Dexter.

Dexter Gordon was a hard-swinging bebop musician and it was fascinating to hear how Hannah interpreted the music to her own melodic and lyrical, yet bold and gritty style.

Dexter started playing alto saxophone when he was fourteen, and at fifteen switched to tenor when his mother bought him the larger horn to fit his larger body.

KC - Hannah, you seem to have done the opposite, choosing to play the large baritone saxophone. How do you find gigging on such a large, heavy instrument and what attracted you to the baritone?

"I just love the lower timbre instruments! I saved up for my baritone and have never looked back, or should I say looked far upwards past the tenor sax! The baritone to me has so much warmth, emotion and flexibility. She can sing at the top yet be punchy and cheeky down at the bottom of the instrument. I've certainly had to build up my stamina on the baritone and it is much heavier than the tenor (which I also perform). Vinyasa yoga and cycling have helped with developing strength both in body and lungs for a full show on the baritone."

Dexter craved a 'normal' life.

KC - Do you think there is such a thing as a 'normal' life in the world of a jazz musician?



Kim Cypher by Ron Milsom

"No! But then who's to say what 'normal' is? Everyone, as humans, are different and we lead different lives. How one jazz musician leads their life and what they aspire to is always different to others. That's what makes us all unique isn't it? Throughout our lives we grow, our opinions and beliefs develop and change as does our musical journey. Sometimes it can feel tough and emotional staying true to ourselves artistically but I'd like to think it will generally come good in the end!"

In his music Dexter was letting everyone know "this is me, and this is my style, and this is what I do. I'm playing the saxophone with power."

KC - How do you let everyone know your style?

"My style is very melodic with lots of energy and emotion from within. Having trained on my sax (and other wind instruments) since the age of 10, I incorporate a lot of technique and advanced technique in my playing naturally.

Like all players I have a tone and style that is unique to me."



"The pandemic has affected everyone. We all weathered the same storm but in different ways and I'm sure we will talk about our lives during that time for as long as we live.

The past 2.5 years have been some of my most intense and emotional yet. My father lost his battle with cancer just before lockdown and as an only child I found it extremely hard not being able to be with my mother as much as I wanted to. Grieving and not being able to see my friends and family was really tough, but my music became my solace. I wrote lots of new pieces and that's how my new album 'Inside Out' came about. Over time, during the pandemic, I worked through the lows and sadness, I understood myself more and, in a way, 'Inside Out' became my way of switching my emotions and turning a corner in my head. It's a hugely personal album and every track has a deep meaning to me, whether an original or standard. Recording it in the studio during lockdown and releasing in September 2021 when restrictions were starting to ease feels very symbolic."

Dexter brought everything to his music. Maxine Gordon stated:

"the good, the bad, and the ugly were transformed when he played his horn."

KC - I am interested to know which Dexter Gordon tracks you chose to play on the night and why?

"I love Latin tracks and as Dexter recorded this one on his album 'Cheese Cake' the first one was an easy choice - 'Manha De Carnival'. Secondly, I have chosen 'Don't Explain'. Dexter plays this ballad with a firm touch and is one of his standout ballads to me. Finally, 'Hanky Panky'. I was first introduced to this tune of Dexter's by the wonderful late Tina May. Obviously, Tina has been in my thoughts a lot and therefore this tune was an easy choice."

Dexter took positives even from negative situations. He stated that even his spell in prison had positives:

"You get some rest. You build your body back."

KC - The last couple of years with the covid-19 pandemic have had negative implications for jazz musicians. Have you been able to take any positives from it?

KC - Do you feel that playing music transforms any stress, problems or worry you may have?

"Anyone who knows me will tell you playing my sax is my daily medicine! If I don't play, even for a short time, every day I feel down and not myself. I have a routine of practice which is a kind of meditation to me. It calms my mind and makes me feel grounded. Whenever you play an instrument, you have to concentrate which automatically stops all the other thoughts in your head and gives you time out from your problems or worries. I'd highly recommend it!"

Dexter once had a dream that had a serious impact on his saxophone practise. In the dream, his late friend Ben Webster walked into the bedroom and said:

"Hey Dex, I heard you can't play anymore." Dexter replied: *"That's not true,"* to which Ben replied: *"Well, if it's not true, prove it. Get up and start practising."*

The very next day Dexter seriously turned up the intensity of his practising for the first time in years.

KC - What motivates you to practise and how disciplined are you?

ronnie scotts

HAR
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Bought

SAXOPHON

RDO

TONIGHT!
Two Sessions:— 7pm—1130pm
midnight—430am

At both sessions we proudly
present the great American
Saxophonist—

EXTER
RDON!

ronnie Scott and the
Tracey Trio
Allye
Dougan
+ Snacks





“I could go on and on about this like the total sax nerd I am, so I’ll try and condense this answer. Part of my personality is always wanting to feel prepared – yes, I was a girl guide lol! So, I always like to be gig-ready and on top of my playing. I just hate that feeling of not having played for a few days and your lip feeling all wrong and your fingers like sausages. Then there’s the finding a reed stress, and maybe your tone isn’t so good because your embouchure hasn’t been used for a few days. So really, I like to play/practise every day. Obviously, there’s the odd exception, but generally every day.”

Dexter stated: “*My life has a happy ending.*”

KC – What is happiness to you?

“My life now.”

All photos of Dexter Gordon and Melba Liston courtesy of Maxine Gordon

Photos of Hannah by Monika S Jakubowska

Photo of Kim Cypher by Ron Milsom

To follow Hannah’s work please [click here](#)

To follow Kim’s work please [click here](#)

To follow Monika’s work please [click here](#)





FAUSTA JOLY

Fausta Joly is an events manager for Toulouse Lautrec, a top London Jazz Club. With her company Joly Licks, she produces events - inspired constantly by poetry and Jazz. As a writer, she is currently recording her first EP with musician Genevieve Dawson.

To celebrate Maxine Gordon's upcoming book, "Quartette: Four Women in Jazz" I invited Jennie Mac (JM) to choose one of the amazing women highlighted. I also created a poem inspired by Melba Liston and Maxine Gordon.

Jennie is a visual artist, poet and musician currently in the North East of the UK. A lover of old time music and aesthetic, Mac strives to breathe a little life into ephemera whilst simultaneously honouring it all. Across practices, their work and style celebrates the niche, the queer, and the weird instead of further othering the self.

Lately, she's been building kitchens, making radio shows, writing about a gal in a graveyard, and drawing a lot of bodies.



Here is her incredible poem:

"Oh But Inside"

inspired by Shirley Scott

oh but inside
by JM

the steam's like you wouldn't believe,
a slither up, a coppery river of slip up, up

we left the feet out,
got (wet) a little ragged,
cut onions, webbed hair
sat so close the smoke
plaited, made new
wallpaper, a fine fix,
simultaneous spontaneous &
altogether how it is.
I keep a glass, get it
below body, hoist up a rhythm of sippin
in a toast to fingers
split and tickling a beat
like nothin, & there's
pomegranate there's salt there's tobacco,
there's oregano, cinnamon
there's
people, pipes, moaning, organ,
knives for slicin, melody
for dicin, and it's still wet out,
feet saturate on the line,
Shirley on time,
clementine
in the kitchen.





TO MELBA BY FAUSTA JOLY

*To the bones
To the steps
To the booster*

*To the hustle
To the tours
To the beauty of shyness*

*Making Dizzy Dizzy,
Dexter behave
Billie stay Billie,
And the Messengers stay on message.*

*Lapping the sound,
Of the players around you -
Hitting new heights,
With a quiet smile.
Knowing to pack light,
Look ahead
And keep elevating.
A soft poke
From your jazz brothers and sisters
For the solo,,,
Melba got her voice
And it sung!
If you haven't heard
Then you should have
But we'll forgive*

It's alright It's ok

*Professor [Maxine Gordon](#)
Is here to educate
Commit our heroines to page
Our Melba gets her day
And she'll be swinging all night!*



Tyeesha is a professional illustrator living in Indianapolis, US. She lives right outside of the downtown area with her husband and cat son. She primarily makes adult coloring books featuring African American characters, and most of the artwork featured here is from her own coloring books. Her art focuses on the afro punk style, which uses a lot of bright colors, patterns, and has a focus on natural hair. You can find examples of her work on [instagram](#), [etsy](#), and [facebook](#). [Links here](#)

Ayanna Witter-Johnson by Tatiana Gorilovsky





Ayanna Witter-Johnson by Tatiana Gorilovsky







ARTISTIC RESEARCH IN JAZZ

A NEW POLYGON FOR FEMALE ARTISTIC RESEARCH POSITIONING

BY JASNA JOVICEVIC

Artistic research in Jazz, as a relatively young practiced based research discipline that creates a critical relationship with intellectual, cultural and creative discourses. At this point, it is crucial that female artist-researchers take a stance, and incorporate results of their own investigation through their practice, bringing into focus the qualitative methods of autoethnographic experience. Especially in jazz music, female music experience is not articulated or discussed enough.

Jazz is a predominantly male music, not only because most of the musicians are male, but also because its aesthetics and social environment is dominated by male ideals of representation. In general, the field of the dominant jazz tradition is the male field of power where women have remained positioned as “other” since its formation. The “authenticity” of female instrumentalists is challenged in already gendered hegemonic style performativity within traditional jazz performance that has undergone a history of performativity. Throughout the history of jazz, women have always been less represented, less successful, less followed and less noticed than their male counterparts. In the jazz discourse as a space for the production of meanings, woman is labeled as “different”, compared to the “real” one; a man.

Performance of jazz musical improvisation is created in the context of social collaboration,

which results in continuous interaction between the multiple bodies of the participants; performativity showcasing the conventions of a certain genre (social identity) and a subjective feeling (individual identity). Playing jazz means playing together, and that implies a hierarchy and distribution of rank and power within the interactive system. The power distribution within collaboration is very important, knowing that jazz improvisation is based on individuality and originality. It can be concluded that the individual strategies are used in group identity formation, so it is essential to investigate the gender aspect of this practice.

Jazz music is one of the places where people learn gender, where ideas about masculinity and femininity (intersected with other categories, such as race, etc.) are taught, debated, and challenged, as a part of social organization. Both on the individual and group levels, the tension between genders is always a sexual, social, political, symbolic and imaginary narrative that is constantly translated, read, and interpreted in new ways over and over again. It is thus possible to read gender representation in jazz music. Even in academic jazz studies, for example, the notions of hot, aggressiveness, virtuosity, authenticity, competitiveness and risk taking have been associated with masculinity, while sweet and sorrowful, sexy, brokenhearted, tender, lyrical, emotional, sentimental and slow with femininity. The music interpreted by female

musicians is often discussed according to its gender-specific significance, which further reinforces male dominance in the field. The gender stereotypes play a significant role in the multiple mechanisms that contribute to female disadvantage in jazz, but other popular music genres as well. Different types of performativity can be found through detailed examinations of jazz performances, with performativity showcasing the conventions of a certain genre.

Artistic research in jazz

Artistic research in music is now a multifaceted attempt which involves a practice-based, practice-led and practice-driven approach. It is research in and through art, usually conducted by artist-scholars and it differentiates itself from the more traditional research on the arts. Artistic research in general does not have a standardized, discipline-specific set of methods; instead, the research is carried out through artistic practice itself. Qualitative methods of autoethnography here are used in order to bring into focus the experiences of the artist-researcher, who conducts research from a first-person perspective. Projects of artistic research in jazz in particular, were only recently acknowledged by jazz research communities.

Improvisation in jazz is not so much the aim anymore, but becomes a method through which artistic research is executed. Here, improvising is conceived and understood as a process of continuous experimentation and exploration. The goal of the artistic research is the production of new knowledge, and seeking after new knowledge. Developing the conception and the presentation of a project becomes itself a creative activity as a process of research, representing a personal poetics of the subject.

The question of artistic research originates from the artist's own practice, where only through this particular practice, her or his accumulated knowledge and experience and curiosity, can this same question be addressed. The results of artistic research in this case go beyond the interpretation or a music composition. In artistic research in music, actually the questions, topic and the project itself arise and formulate from the practice and one's own personal particular experience, personal trajectory as an artist,

musician, thinker, social actor or spiritual being. They are explored and investigated through one's practice, but the research is situated in intellectual, cultural and creative discourses with which it forms a critical relationship. Thinking about the ways in which this knowledge will be shared is itself part of the research process, of a new territory of research; it became the essence of the process itself.

I have been an artistic researcher in jazz for a few years now. Artistic research enables me—as a musician—to develop many qualities that I have both as a musician, and as someone who critically thinks about music and about art. In this creative process, I became active both as a performer, and as a composer, but also, simultaneously and in parallel, as someone who critically thinks about my own artistic and scientific materials, generating the artistic, epistemic, and discursive outputs. The goal of artistic research in jazz improvisation is to explore the feeling of creating or experiencing music with the body, through the social and personal prism. It is also aimed at investigating how the improvisation has an impact on the improviser her or himself and the experiences during the process of improvisation.

Artistic research in jazz, but also, new jazz styles like free improvised music, experimental jazz, cross-over, and multidisciplinary projects (ecology, bio, conceptual etc...), although much less than men, included women since their development. There is a growing scene of female music performers in Europe and worldwide, as well as supportive networks promoting their work. The task of these practices are to change, intervene and release the form and structure from previous improvisational rules in the practice of traditional jazz discourse. That marginalized music scene seems like a “safe place” for female creation, keeping the doors wide open for the diversity, new artistic expression and different cultural environments. Already now, it is evident that in Europe there are more women active in these genres and artistic research in jazz than in the mainstream. My predictions are that artistic research in jazz and the new music practices are becoming open polygons for creative expression in female instrumental improvisation.



Herstories, new interpretations of jazz narratives, and the jazzwomen testimonies prove that there is a hidden, untold, unexplained, unsearched experience of a female jazz player. Artistic research in Jazz today offers an important exploratory observation prism for a female jazz instrumentalist. Gender position is the research process in jazz practice as a performative space, where the female player attempts to understand her experience of music creation and interpretation that is different from a man's. Investigation, discovery and the articulation of own experience could influence further performativities and understanding of female music improvisation. Gender perspective in Artistic research in jazz could define the critical and theoretically positioned reflection by the female artist on music practice. Exactly this type of research through art can offer new interpretations of traditional jazz practice, free jazz or any other music genre with the particular genre performativity. I affirm and invite female improvising instrumentalists to consider artistic research in jazz as a tool for developing the activist and feminist perspectives of music practice.

Jasna Jovičević is saxophone, bass clarinet, flute, and spacedrum player and composer from Serbia. Jasna received her BA from Franc Liszt Music Academy in Budapest, Hungary, and MA in composition from York University in Toronto. She also studied music in Serbia, Brazil, USA and Austria, won the grants to Veneto Jazz (Italy) Banff Centre (Canada) ArtsLink (New York) and Djerassi Residency (San Francisco) Artist in Residency programs, as well as competitions in Milan, Budapest and Ljubljana for her compositions and performances. She performed her work around Europe, USA and Canada on various national and international festivals.

She has long experience in pedagogy, teaching at the University level, but mainly interested in non-formal education. She combines music knowledge with the knowledge of Yoga, Nature, Psychology, and Ecology, encouraging creativity and personal experience of music and art.

To follow Jasna's work please click [here](#)

CECILIA
SANCHIETTI

THE RHYTHM
OF KINDNESS





Photo by Roberto Scorta

CECILIA SANCHIETTI:

THE RHYTHM OF KINDNESS

Award-winning drummer and composer, teacher and art director Cecilia Sanchi-etti is an absolute inspiration. A versatile and highly experienced performer, with an impressive portfolio, Cecilia has released three albums under her own name 'Circle Time', 'La Terza Via' and her recent release 'Postcard From Gamla Stan'. She is also the founder of the brilliant Jazz Mine Network, an Italian organisation whose 'main purpose is to promote the equal opportunities in arts to fight the existing unbalances, through educational, advocacy and awareness-raising actions.

Talking to Cecilia, her passion and excitement is infectious. Her belief in the power of music as a tool for connection and her drive for gender equality is exhilarating.

I am the president of the Jazz Mine Network and we are a cultural association that I opened just three years ago. We are working now on research, studies about the gender balance in jazz and improvising in Italy. We are producing some advocacy tools for example now there is DIJ-ITA which is a platform, a list, so if you go inside it lists of all female jazz musicians in Italy. We are at the beginning, but we are collecting more and more names because the festivals here are not balanced - lots of men and no women. They usually say that they don't look for women because it's really hard find them and I think it's true because we are less in number, so we have less promotion, so it is really difficult to look for us on Internet. So, we decided to simply open this list that everyone can go to

and be part of and then we will send this list to the festivals.

It's for the whole of Italy but specifically for jazz because we have more problems than in other sectors. We are trying, slowly to open our work to other music fields but we are a small association so at this stage we want to focus on jazz. It's really, really important and here in Italy, I think we are at the first stage they refused the idea that the problem exists and so if you refuse the idea, you can't solve the problem and there is a lot of discrimination in this way. So we are doing some studies, statistical studies to show and the results are on the website and show that it's true.

Click here!

So, you can read that female musicians play less in festivals - there are some statistics now.

It's really hard because we are only few people but it's growing! I was called to speak about the situation at a showcase in Italy, to talk about the gender balance, what we can do, and we are starting to work with conservatories because there are problems with education too.

Cecilia's passion in this area developed from her own experience as one of only a few female drummers in Italy. Her call to music initially began on the piano but it wasn't long before she made a connection with the drums and jazz.



Photo by Guillermo Luna

I started when I was a teenager and it was not easy at the beginning because you know now it's hard and 20 years ago was harder! I was playing piano and then then I started to play drums and work with different teachers and was immediately put in the music ensembles, for jazz music. I was a teenager and I didn't know anything about jazz, but they invited me because nobody wanted to play jazz! But it was OK for me because now I think I can explain to myself why I love so much jazz. I have a degree in sociology too, so I was mixing the two – playing and sociology. I decided to be a professional musician and I was around 28 years old, but I think the social connection of music is really important to me. So, with my music, I always try to connect these two aspects of me.

I think I probably chose drums because the drums really transmit joy, drums are really a joyful instrument.

I remember that one day there was some drummers on the TV and I immediately stayed there, and my mother says that when I was 5/6 years old, I would run in front of the TV to look for drummers. Tullio De Piscopo is a really famous drummer from Naples and I was really in love him, when he was a teenager because he was a really funny man and also, he played the drums in a really joyful way. So, I think this was part of the attraction for me for drums but also because drums permit me to listen to the music. For me the most important thing is not only drums but music, in the total sense.

The importance of role models cannot be underestimated and as a child, regardless of gender, you need to see things to believe they are possible.

Growing up when I was a teenager, there was one female drummer in pop music but none at all in jazz.. we don't have examples of women. I am one of the first female drummers in Italy and I am continuing on my road and I don't stop!

I am in Italy and because I speak about jazz mostly, I think there are about four women playing... but it's better than some years ago!



Photo by Roberto Scorta

The problem here is that sometimes the girls start to play the drums and then stop. We are conducting a study about it. First reason is because they do not have the role models. There are only a few drummers, so as a girl, a teenager, if you do not have an example that someone has reached her goal, why would you think you could?

Also, there are a lot of difficulties here, so they know that if they want to do that, they have to overcome a lot of difficulties and be really motivated. Sometimes girls are really not so brave so it's a problem. I usually say that to be an artist, a female artist in drums, not only must you be brave but in Italy and probably also in some parts of Europe, you must be really strong and not all women drummers are strong in this way.

Born in Rome and with a love of traveling, Cecilia has found a real connection with the Swedish Jazz scene and the joy of experiencing different cultures.

The international dimension was really, really important to me from the beginning because I have this kind of mind probably, but also because I think that it's important to compare your experience with other cultures and with the other musicians. I also felt the need to go abroad for more possibilities but also to understand how the situation is for women in jazz abroad, out of Italy.

I have a great connection with Sweden. I love this country and I love the jazz in Sweden. I had a concert in 2019, my first concert there and at the end of the concert, I was really shocked. At the beginning I was really worried because there were other girls there to play in the same my concert and my music, it was a little bit different, more melodic. So, I was really worried but at the end the concert, I was shocked because all the audience and the other musicians, Swedish musicians, came to me to say that my jazz was really similar to the way they think in jazz. So, they also suggested for me to

start this adventure in Sweden and to try to create a connection between my style of composing and the style of composing jazz in Sweden. I think there are similar aspects in some ways, so I tried to link my melodic ideas of composition (I think it is an Italian thing) and the atmosphere in the Nordic countries. So, at this moment, I'm trying to kind of blend these two things.



Cecilia's recent album 'Postcard From Gamla Stan' has been a huge critical success.

'There are an increasing number of women playing drums and Italy's Cecilia Sanchiotti is among the best, also composing music and leading her band on Postcard From Gamla Stan...The music is crisp and engaging, modern jazz led from Sanchiotti's chair'
O'S Place Jazz Magazine

'Each song is a trek in the hills, with different panoramas and vistas after going up and down the trails. Impressive paths'
Jazz Weekly

'Cecilia's drumming and compositional style is first rate and the group she assembled more than lives up to the challenge of performing the music on this noteworthy album of modern, mainly acoustic jazz'
Roots Music Report

Released in October, but due to the pandemic restrictions, live performances were restricted and in fact she has recently held an album launch event at Fasching Jazz Club in Stockholm, which you can watch above.

To end, I asked Cecilia her current plans and if a new album was on the way soon...

My last album was recorded with a Swedish quintet in Gothenburg last summer and was released in October. We had the COVID period, so there were not many opportunities to perform but I have started to compose some other songs for a new album. I have a clear idea and I've just composed three songs and will be in Sweden to the end of July and I am reflecting on when we will record. It's strange, I have composed some songs in the past weekend, and you know composing is strange... sometimes you need a lot of time to compose and then sometimes it's just really there - wow!

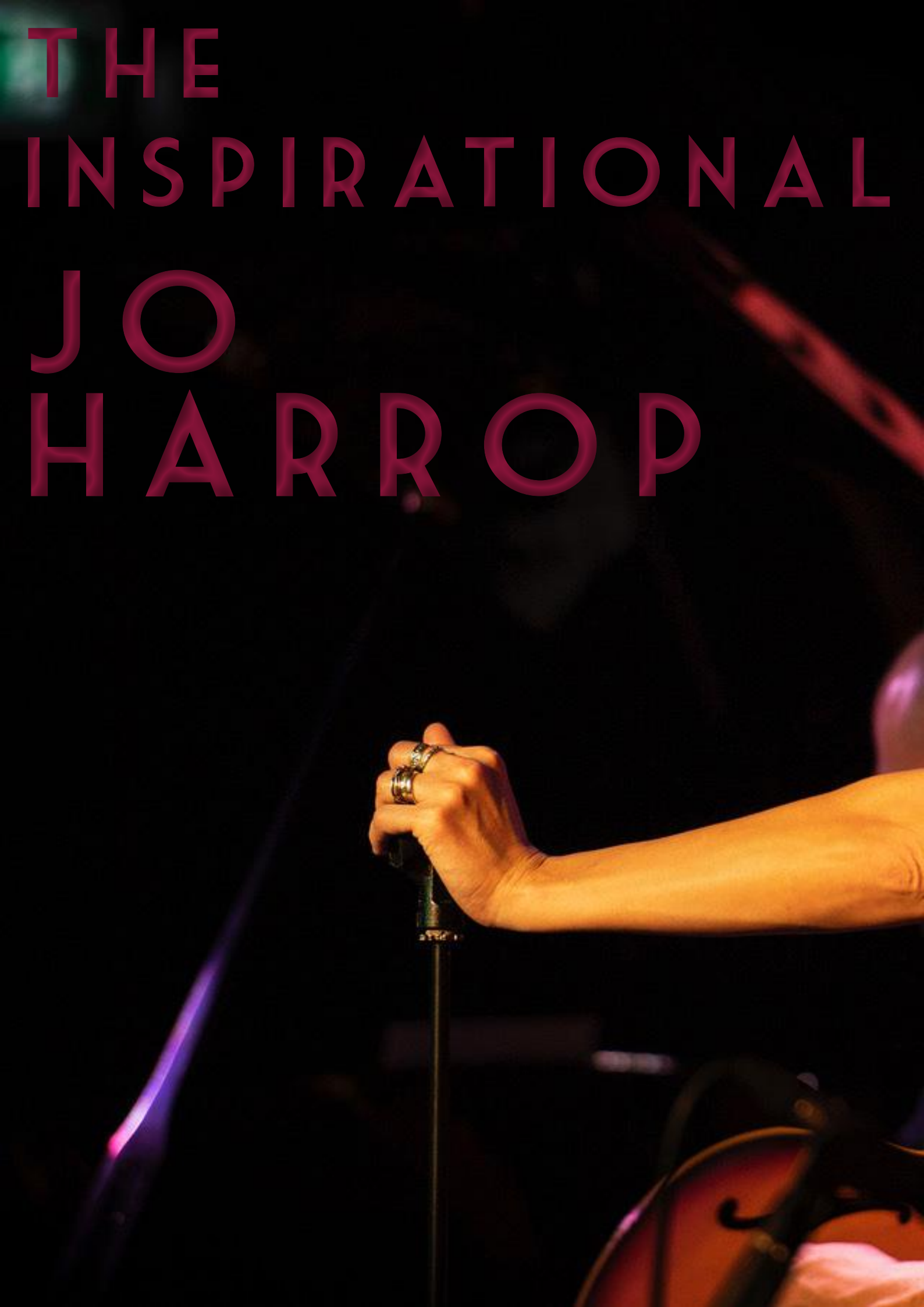
Cecilia is an incredible woman who's work clearly demonstrates not only her artistry and expertise, but a true desire to not only support the jazz industry but to actively change it for the better.

To find out more about Cecilia and live performances, please click [here](#)

To find out more and support the Jazz Mine Network, please click [here](#)



Photo by Paolo Soriani



THE INSPIRATIONAL JO HARROP

Photo by Tatiana Gorilovsky





My own hair weeks before it began to fall out!

We love Jo Harrop here at Women in Jazz Media. An incredible artist, who we have always been very happy to shout about. Her beautiful, velvety voice is always partnered by her stunning photos, which present a strong, confident – and happy human being. She shared this story on Facebook and she kindly gave us her permission to share with you all on here. **It's powerful.**

Here's a little story I finally feel like talking about.... I lost my hair.

I got very sick for several weeks last year & I also lost all my beautiful huskies one after another... and then my hair just fell out... I'm not talking a few strands - it was falling out in great big clumps for weeks - you could see my scalp & I only had about 20% of my hair left.

I felt so many emotions - shock, anger, fear, embarrassment, depression, anxiety, worry, self doubt, insomnia... I cried a bit, and then felt guilty for being stupidly vain and crying over something as silly as hair!

It's just hair!! It's not the end of the world!

But living in a world that is very visual, with people taking pics and videos left right and centre, posting all over the socials regardless, I didn't feel very feminine anymore and became very self conscious... I'd always had long hair to hide behind!

So I panic bought potions and pills, wigs, (some very dodgy ones), turbans, hats, various hair contraptions.... Considered shaving my head completely or drastic expensive surgery to try to fix it.

I had to get up on stage most nights and I was releasing my album so I had to make videos and have photo shoots & I just wanted to hide!

I never usually share personal things like this - but I've lived with it almost a year and I've made peace with it!

The important thing is that I am healthy ... in fact after my initial reaction, to drink away my sorrows, it's actually made me be more healthy. Most of all, I've kept my sense of humour about it because I look like Edward Scissorhands in the mornings and my kids think I'm a scarecrow & tell me they liked me better with long hair (I'm working on it)

Slowly it's beginning to grow back ... it's a form of alopecia brought on by trauma, but it's starting to reverse.

Maybe someone else who's reading this is going through the same?

I'm reading a book at the moment about getting and staying healthy - and I realised that sometimes it is helpful to write about these experiences for yourself and sometimes for others who might be going through the same thing.

A lovely lady I was speaking with about this encouraged me to share my story as she thought it might be useful to people going through similar.

Maybe I'll feel like deleting this... but writing it has been quite cathartic & I wished I'd seen something like this when it first happened to me so I didn't feel alone & worried so much about it.

Look after yourselves friends

Things I'm working on getting more (or less of) Balance, calm, fresh air, nature, exercise, water & healthy eating & enough of the right nutrition. (Modest amounts of wine ()) - Oh and sleep!

P.s - I won't be writing a song about hair!!



To cover the patches on my scalp you could see I wore these soft turbans on stage as the wigs hurt and I wasn't confident in them yet but as the hair grew back then it cushioned it from the wig more.



*Nov 2021 - London Jazz Week -
I had very little hair here.*



*In my wig at Ronnie Scott's
for my Vinyl Launch*



Photo by Tatiana Gorilovsky

*Thank you for sharing your story with us Jo!
You are truly inspirational.*





ILARIA CAPALBO



Photo by Andrea Palmucci





Photo by Massimo DeDominicis

ILARIA CAPALBO

THE QUEEN OF RESILIENCE

Bassist and composer Ilaria Capalbo recently released her brilliant album, *Karthago*, her first as a leader. Already established in the scene as an exceptional bassist, having worked with artists such as Norma Winstone and Steffano di Battista, Ilaria is also one of the co-leaders of the Kosmos trio and a member of the Chihiro Yamanaka's European Trio.

It was an absolute joy to talk to Ilaria about her work and we started off discussing her travels, how she came to be settled in Stockholm and how it compared to the jazz scene in Naples.

I ended up here in Stockholm because when I was studying for my Masters, which was a few years ago now, I applied and was awarded a scholarship for studying a year abroad and so I got into a programme here in Stockholm and I liked it very much. I moved back to Italy, but I decided that I wanted to be back here and that was just before the pandemic.

I think that in my case there was quite a lively jazz scene in Naples but the thing that most appealed to me here in Sweden was the amount of original projects that were coming out. Anything new that comes into Italy seems to be more focused around 'big names' whereas I found a little more space here.

The pandemic affected all of us in many different ways and for some artists it was a time

of incredible productivity, but as always, with challenges. I can only imagine how hard it must have been for Ilaria, both personally and musically, moving to a new country and then finding everything was locked down.

I had a lot of time during the pandemic and also, I was confronted with a lot of things -moving to another country was one thing and moving at such a 'special' time was another. When you move to another country you really want to maybe meet other people, start doing stuff together, go out... but none of that was possible. I decided that I could work instead and so I started writing.

Ilaria has been active on the scene for quite a while and has a huge amount of experience as a bassist but this was her first album project as the leader. We talked about her compositional process and her vision for the album.

It was a long process actually, not the writing itself but imagining how it could sound with the people that I had listened to but I kind of had this feeling... It's one of those rare times when you have a picture that you have the time to paint in your mind and then it is nearly the same when it comes out. You know how sometimes when you write the song, it's not really real until you play it? I had actually a lot of time to think of this in detail and it ended up the way that I had pictured it.

The album is stunning and understandably has received incredible reviews. Bass and compositions from Ilaria with an inspired group of musicians: Thomas Backman (alto sax, clarinet) Fredrik Nordström (tenor /baritone sax)

Andreas Hourdakakis (guitar) Fredrik Rundqvist (drums) Tobias Wiklund (cornet) and Mats Äleklint (trombone).

I spent a lot of time listening to their own records and whenever possible I would play with them. This whole project actually started because one of the musicians, Thomas Backman, he's also a colleague of mine at my day job (teaching), we started this little tradition that we would meet up half an hour before and just play a little bit.

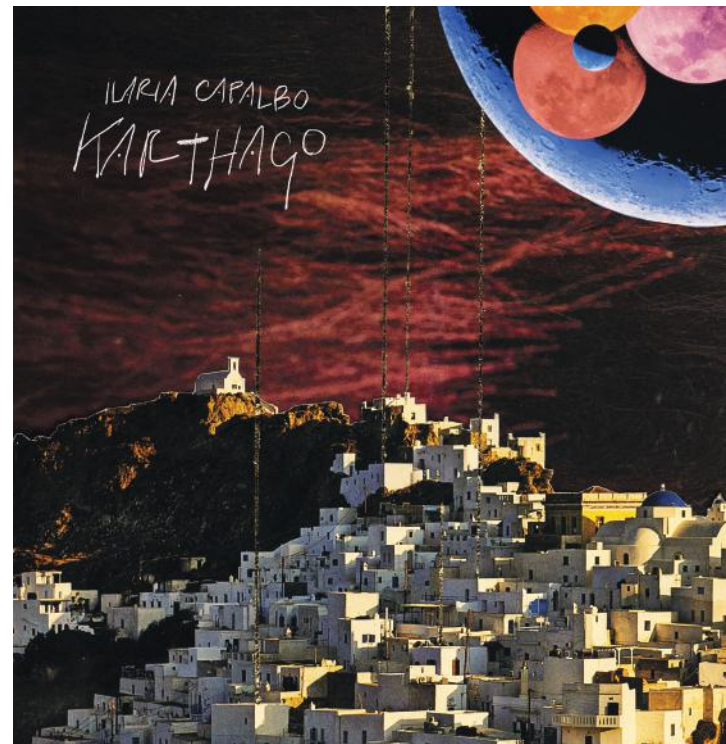
Taking on any project as a leader for the first time, can be daunting, especially during the pandemic and especially having just moved to a new country. Ilaria has demonstrated her inspirational leadership skills and resilience through this project.

It was fun and I loved it. I was talking to a friend and I was saying that I'm not the same person, it seems very weird but it's because I didn't have that much confidence before. It wasn't something that came easy to me, but it worked very well. The thing with writing, well it is a little bit like you're playing an instrument and you need to practise...and it's a bit abstract and it can be scary, but I enjoyed it and it was the perfect pandemic activity!

Ilaria clearly has a passion and significant knowledge of history, especially Italian history and the album Karthago is inspired by the legendary Queen Dido and the city she founded.

You might say that it's like a concept album and I am very much into history. Where I'm from in Italy, we study that in school, and we are told all of these stories. I wanted to take the theme of Karthago, the City, and Queen Dido - it's history but it's also mythology, sort of linked, which is usually what happens in the Mediterranean. There are a lot of sources that can be found, like poetry for example and I liked the theme of the city because Karthago actually was a real place and it can still be seen. It was a huge power in the Mediterranean, until Rome came along, and they inevitably clashed because they were too big for each other and they fought for dominance.

One thing I was intrigued by was the fact that it was a Queen that founded the city and brought it to prosperity and there's a lot of literature on Queen Dido, but it was also a tale of resilience. Yes, it was erased but it resisted for a very long time and so I saw it as a way of being yourself no matter what, a tale of empowerment.



I exist and because I exist, I'm going to fight back and after that point it doesn't really matter if I am defeated because I am remembered, so it was a bit of a metaphor for a lot of things.

I think so she was clever, but she was vulnerable at the same time. They say that the founding of the city happened because she fled from her hometown into the spot where Karthago was founded and she had the permission from the king of this area to build a town. But he said you can have this cow skin and that's going to be your land as much as this skin can cover. So, she cut it into, super thin strips and she put it around the whole area.

There is much to say about the fascinating story of Queen Dido and we talked about how Ilaria embedded this in her music.

There is a narration on the course of the whole album. The title tune 'Karthago' for example, is a little bit emblematic you might say, and I hope that it comes across. I mean one good thing is that when I brought the music to the musicians, they kind of had that vision immediately so it's like an apocalyptic tune, and they play it like that when we play it live. It's dense and it's one bass line for the whole tune and the bass has this role of keeping everything together but also unleashing chaos at some points and that worked well also in the record. There's also another tune that is particularly relevant, it's the first tune that is called 'Beloved' and with that it was kind of a tribute to everything that is held dear, that is part of the vulnerability in that song but also, its celebratory.



Photo by Roberto Cifarelli

And finally, I asked Ilaria, with the significant depth to her album, not just the historical elements, but musically, what did she hope an audience would take away from a performance.

I think that's a very good question and I mean it would be nice if they questioned? If they went a bit behind the music because then you can explain and then it becomes a message.

Interview by Fiona Ross

Karthago is available to buy [here](#)

To support Ilaria's work, click [here](#)

Photos by Massimo DeDominicis



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SHEILA JORDAN





© MBP-Michel BINSTOK.

Photo by Michel Binstok

SHEILA JORDAN: PORTRAIT OF A LEGEND

BY NICK LEA AND GEORGIA MANCIO

In the pantheon of jazz vocalists, the names that immediately seem to trip off the tongue are Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald and Sarah Vaughan. The name missing from that list is Sheila Jordan. Sheila began singing on local radio stations in the late 1930's going on to working semi-professionally alongside her regular day job (she did not turn professional until she was in her sixties) to the current day as she still performs and tours regularly. Her remarkable career now spans nine decades and she still shows no sign of slowing down anytime soon.

As well as her courage and indomitable spirit, Sheila is an acknowledged forerunner of the bebop style of singing and along with her ability to scat forged a new way of integrating vocals with the ever more complex harmonies of bop. Her lyric writing and improvising skills were new at the time, and continue to sound fresh and exciting today.

Sheila Jordan, was born Sheila Jeanette Dawson on November 18th, 1928 in Detroit, Michigan. Her mother, just seventeen struggled to raise her young daughter and turned to alcohol, and Sheila was sent to live with her grandparents in Pennsylvania where she grew up with nine other siblings who were actually aunts and uncles. Life with her grandparents in small coal mining town of Summerhill in the Allegheny mountains was difficult. Money was tight, and the situation made worse by her alcoholic grandfather. Of this period in her life Sheila recalls, *"We were probably the poorest people in a poor town...we had an outhouse and no water in the house... In the winter time all of us would sleep in one bedroom without any sheets of pillowcases on the beds; we just had blankets."*

Not a particularly conducive environment for a young girl to grow up in, there was little warmth or affection, and certainly a lack of love from her grandparents. Sheila would, however, find comfort in music quickly developing a good ear, singing popular songs heard on the radio, performing in school and local talent competitions. Often taunted by fellow classmates, *"It was hard for me because the other kids would get jealous, try to imitate me and make fun of my singing"*, Sheila remembers. She was encouraged though by one of her teachers who would boost her confidence.

In 1942 she left Pennsylvania moving back to Detroit to live with her mother, This would again prove to be an unhealthy move on a young teenager, and with her mother's alcoholism this again was an unhappy time for Sheila. *"My mother was always very sweet but she had a lot of relationships that were very sick. She had very low self-esteem and being the alcoholic that she was I saw a lot of stuff growing up when I was with her, like beatings and it was horrible"*. Continuing her education, Sheila studied at the Commerce High School learning clerical skills that would serve her well for much of her adult life.

Music still remained an important part of her life and she would spend her lunch breaks listening to records on a jukebox in a place across the road from school. It was here that she first heard the jazz musician that would change her life forever, when by chance she selected a tune called 'Now's The Time' by saxophonist Charlie Parker. Remembering that moment in her life, Sheila says the *"after the first four notes I was hooked. I got goose bumps and I instantly knew that was the music I had been waiting to hear and would*



Photo by Ed Lanni

dedicate my life to singing.”

Charlie Parker, or 'Bird' as he was nicknamed, was part of a small group of musicians that were revolutionising small group jazz in the 1940's. With its complex harmonies and fast tempos, the young musicians pioneering this new music called bebop were seen as cool and hip by an impressionable teenager and when Parker and his group would visit Detroit Sheila and guitarist Kenny Burrell would often dress to make themselves look older to get into the clubs to hear their musical heroes. Wanting to encourage the young followers of his music. If the youngsters were refused entry, Parker would ask the club owners to leave the back doors open so that the kids could gather and hear the music.

1947 would be an important year for Sheila as the nineteen year old singer would find herself performing in a vocal trio with: Leroy Mitchell and Skeeter Spight, and using the name Skeeter,

Mitch and Jean (Sheila at the time was using her middle name). The trio would transcribe solos, sing standards and most importantly write lyrics to bebop compositions, the embryonic beginning of Sheila's unique style was beginning to emerge as Bird told her “You have million-dollar ears, kid.” Also, that year saw her secure her first clerical job and gave her independence from her mother.

In 1951 she moved to work and was working for a Madison Avenue Ad agency by day and by night was going to the city's jazz clubs, making connections and sitting in whenever possible. It was during this time that she studied with pianist, Lennie Tristano who taught her the importance of lyrics and how to connect with them, and crucially encouraging her to find her own sound. Still captivated by the music of Charlie Parker, Sheila made the ill-fated decision to marry Duke Jordan who was the pianist in Bird's band. Jordan, like Parker was a heroin addict. The marriage lasted ten years and the relationship was an unhappy time for the singer, although did produce a daughter, Tracy who Sheila says that in her daughter she “*finally had someone that I*

could truly love and that I was sure would love me back”.

The early sixties would find Sheila in a happier place. She had financial stability in her job and also had a residency 2 or 3 nights a week at a gay bar called Page 3 in Greenwich Village. By now, she was really establishing her reputation, but as she says of that time

“I made six dollars, gave the babysitter four dollars and since it was four in the morning, I had to take a cab home. You can see I didn’t do it for the money.”

Meeting George Russell at this time also played a big part in Sheila's musical development, with Russell inviting her to sing on his album *The Outer View* in 1961. This would mark Sheila's recording debut, and a demo recorded with Russell, to whom she was now engaged, would result in a recording contract with Blue Note. An auspicious start to her recording career signing with one of the most important labels in jazz, and her contract also made her the first vocalist signed to the imprint; and it is with her solo debut album released in 1963, *Portrait Of Sheila* where the magic really begins.



Recorded over two sessions in September and October 1962 at Rudy Van Gelder's studio

Sheila laid down some tracks that would immediately announce that here was a major new artist. Listening again to the music Georgia Mancio reflects that

"Her 1962 debut album, still stands for me as one of the most important oeuvres by a jazz vocalist. Every track is so strong, so full of character and authenticity, and although there is none of her trademark scat, it's a masterclass in lyrical improvisation: placing and displacing words and changing the emphasis with ease and flexibility over multiple choruses. Her confidence and maturity is perhaps not surprising: by 1962 she was a single mum, working a day job at an ad agency, and performing a 2-3 night weekly residency in Greenwich Village." Continuing, she adds, *"When I listen in particular to the ballads on this set ('Who Can I Turn To Now', 'I'm A Fool To Want You', etc), I am transported.*

Dave Frishberg's recollection: *'Sheila was magic. The customers would stop gabbing ... and the whole place would be under her spell'.*

It would be easy to underestimate the finesse here: the sheer breeziness of the fast paced 'Let's Face The Music and Dance'; the change of intent from heartbreak to defiance in 'Laugh, Clown, Laugh' (both firmly in the pocket); the final glide of 'When The World Was Young' and so many other subtly virtuosic moments. It also shows she was ahead of her time. Since being invited to sit in with Mingus' pianoless quartet, she had been exploring the idea of a double bass and voice duo, but as it was something new at the time, Blue Note allowed for only one song in this format: the witty parent/child dynamic of Oscar Brown Jr's lyrics to 'Dat Dere' (written by pianist, Bobby Timmons) which has since become one of her signature songs, here performed with bassist Steve Swallow." If, as it appears, that Blue Note bottled the suggestion of recording Sheila with just bass for accompaniment then the idea of using Barry Galbraith on guitar was an inspired one. Galbraith's playing is suitably sparse leaving plenty of space for Sheila to work her magic with her timing and delivery, which she does with devastating effect.

After the spectacular debut album for Blue Note, Sheila would not record again under her own name until 1975 on a set with Alan Pasqua on piano, bassist Cameron Brown (who would later become an important collaborator with the singer), Beaver Harris on drums and tenor saxophonist, Norman Marnell. Titled *Confirmation* and released on the East Wind imprint the album featured a mixture of standards and a medley of songs dedicated to children. As good as the album is, it is her follow up recorded in 1977 that Sheila once again made her presence felt in an inspiring set. Simply titled *Sheila* this was the setting for Jordan that Blue Note could have recorded, but balked at the idea. Steeplechase showed no such qualms and arranged to record Sheila accompanied by Norwegian bassist, Arild Andersen. Recorded over two days in August 1977 the resulting album featured a nice mixture of standards and a couple of compositions by pianist Steve Kuhn. The empathy between Andersen and Sheila is staggering, and as adventurous as the bassist is, Sheila's delivery and improvisations at times make him sound the more conservative of the two. Sheila puts her stamp on Billy Strayhorn's 'Lush Life' (I've never heard it sung like this before!), and 'Better Than Anything' is a real delight. The singer's admiration for Billie Holiday is clear for all to hear on 'Don't Explain' penned by Billie and Arthur Herzog jr. and the beautiful dedication, 'Lady Day' written by Rudy Stevenson.

Now starting to make her presence felt on record, Sheila also made a couple of surprise but welcome appearances on ECM Records. The German imprint under the guiding hand of founder and producer, Manfred Eicher was always open to new sounds and concepts and was recording an ever-widening circle of artists from around the globe. In 1979, Sheila appeared on *Playground*, a duet album with pianist Steve Kuhn with lyrics that have a tendency to lean to a darker side than normally associated with the singer. In an appraisal of the album for *Jazz Views*, Jim Burlong wrote "*this truly is a highly impressive piece of work and connects with the listener in a similar way to*

much of Billie Holiday's output. You may not be dancing down the street after your first listen to this album, but you may well return to it time and again...". Later that year Sheila was back in the studio, again with pianist Kuhn, but this time on an album under the stewardship of bassist, Steve Swallow, which Georgia Mancio notes is "*Further proof, that Sheila impresses and convinces in any situation on these two totally contrasting recordings... integrated into Steve Swallow's dynamic, sometimes quirky settings of Robert Creeley's poems in Home*". Indeed Sheila is once again in fine company with Kuhn, Swallow, Bob Moses on drums, saxophonist Dave Liebman and the late Lyle Mays on synthesizer, in a set that draws on the tradition along with some forward looking arrangements from Swallow that have stood the test of time well.

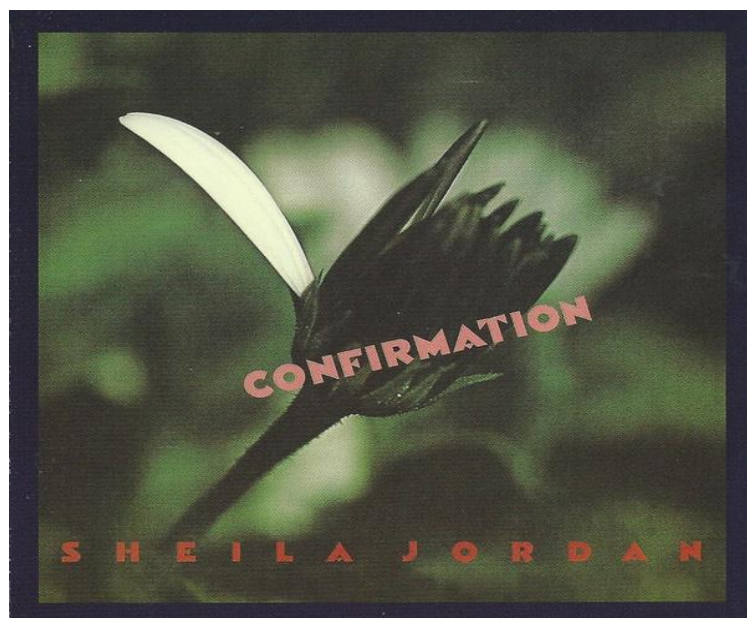




Photo by Nina Melis

PHOTO BY NINA MELIS

From here on in, Sheila's recording output begins to become far more prolific with a steady stream of releases that find her settling on a more familiar repertoire in a mixture of standards and a few original compositions in which she always brings out the best in the material and her musical colleagues. What is most interesting is how Sheila, often reworking familiar material that she has recorded and performed live on countless occasions remains so fresh. Like Lee Konitz and Lennie Trisatano, with whom she studied, she believes that familiarity enables one to know the song so intimately that she is able to go anywhere at any time and this does make for some exciting listening.

The Crossing released in 1984 is a quiet classic with nine tracks featuring different line ups from duets to quintets. As Georgia is quick to point out, "*The album showcases the (sometimes underestimated) range of Sheila's vocal skills: gutsy blues (her iconic 'Sheila's Blues'), gossamer scat and vocalese ('Little Willie Leaps'), the beauty of her legato lines and deep emotional connection to the lyric*

('It Never Entered My Mind', and 'You Must Believe in Spring'). Her audaciousness (I love the descending run on 'Don't Explain') never compromises the authenticity of her interpretation and storytelling, imbuing the whole album with a tangible tranquillity. The band is wonderful, Kenny Barron, Harvie S, Ben Riley plus Tom Harrell, and Sheila's life affirming original title track – originally inspired by an old lover's artwork and written in celebration of her sobriety – is one of my favourite songs of all time." Sheila would reunite with trumpeter and flugelhorn player, Tom Harrell, on Little Song recorded in June 2002. A lovely set, Harrell plays on four titles including a gentle 'Autumn In New York' and an absorbing 'The Touch Of Your Lips' with some incredibly sensitive accompaniment from Steve Kuhn, and some lovely muted trumpet from Harrell.

After the modest success of the album with Arild Andersen, Sheila was still fascinated by the concept of working with just a bassist, and two outstanding albums can be found with two different partnerships. The first is with Harvie S on an album Yesterdays (Live In Concert)

recorded in 1990 but not released until 2012. Of the album Georgia notes that, *"Sheila finally got to record in duo with bassist Arild Anderson in 1978, immediately showing her absolute command in this pared back setting. But the development, breadth and sense of an equal partnership really flourish in her later collaborations, first with Harvie S, then Cameron Brown. For me she is a peerless live performer: meticulous, engaging, spontaneous, with a sincerity and passion that never fails to move me. So, I particularly love this live set with Harvie S, packed with intricate yet fluid arrangements (an epic, virtuosic 'Honeysuckle Rose / Ain't Misbehavin') and beautifully restrained ballads (the rapturous 'Lazy Afternoon' with Sheila's Native American scat). Both demonstrate their enormous versatility including Harvie's beautiful bowing and even an operatic foray from Sheila ('I Could Have Danced All Night'). The recording quality is excellent and the date really captures both the focus and exuberance between them."*

Equally fine is I've Grown Accustomed To The Bass (she certainly has!), and is fascinating listening to the two albums back to back just how different the two bassists are, and how

As if to show her versatility, Sheila had always wanted to record with a string quartet. In 1993 she got her wish and made an album, Heart Strings with pianist and arranger, Alan Broadbent.



With an emphasis on ballads, Broadbent writes some exquisite arrangement for the strings, and as Georgia says of the album, describing Sheila's vocals as *"melting into pianist/composer Alan Broadbent's luscious and endlessly inventive arrangements for string quartet"....* and includes some beautiful originals: 'Out To Sea' (Cheryl Pyle's lyrics to Tom Harrell's composition 'Sail Away'); Clifford Brown and Abbey Lincoln's 'Japanese Dream' in a moving medley with Irving Berlin's 'What'll I Do' and Broadbent's own 'Heart's Desire' with lyricist (and Sheila fan!) Dave Frishberg. I was utterly transported by her live version of this album in London in 2018 with Pete Churchill's Trio and The Tori String Quartet (<https://www.jazzviews.net/sheila-jordan---back-in-the-uk.htm>).

The remarkable recording career of Sheila Jordan seemingly went round in a complete circle with the discovery of a long lost recording. Discovered by record dealers Jeremy Sloan and Hadley Kinslow of SloLow Records, who discovered this record among a large collection of acetates that they purchased. The music was made available to Capri Records who released it as Comes Love: Lost Session 1960 in 2021. The music comes as a startling revelation as it was recorded a full two years before Portrait Of Sheila, and immediately marks her out as a major stylist in the making. Adding to the mystery of the recording, with no identifying label on the acetate, or the album packaging there is much that remains unknown about the recording. Sixties years on Sheila herself has no recollection of the session, or the musicians who participated. An important discovery the music is impeccable with Sheila weaving her inimitable magic on some beautiful ballads and standards, and an early example of one of her staple songs, 'Don't Explain'.

Remarkably, this is not the end of the story, as at the tender young age of ninety-three Sheila is still touring and recording and this year finds the vocalist releasing more new music. Steeplechase have again had the foresight to take the opportunity to record Sheila on an album title trioTrio Meets Sheila Jordan. Recorded in March 2021 and featuring pianist, Jacob Sacks, David Ambrose on bass and drummer Vinnie Sperrazza, Sheila performs some of her well

loved songs with a lovely 'If I Should Lose You' and a timely reprise of her own song, 'The Crossing'.

The other new release from Sheila was recorded live at the Mezzrow Jazz Club on 25th October 2021 with Alan Broadbent on piano and Harvie S on bass. This is a delightful meeting of old friends in an intimate venue with an appreciative audience, and I'll wager there's many a singer out there who would eagerly grasp an opportunity to be accompanied by Harvie and Alan who are impeccable throughout. Sheila shows that she still has what it takes to hold an audience in the palm of her hand with a wonderful scat chorus on 'The Touch Of Your Lips'; and a wonderful reading of another staple in her repertoire over the years, 'Baltimore Oriole'. This is quite a special recording, capturing the essence and spirit of Sheila Jordan doing what she does best.

With such an extensive discography now available there is much to enjoy, and it has been a great pleasure to be able to enlist the ears and advice of Georgia Mancio on some "new Sheila" to discover. When comparing our listening notes, we inevitably picked some of the same recordings, but also to our delight were able to come up some less obvious choices and some new favourites. The albums mentioned are a representation of Sheila's available recordings, and Georgia and I hope that you will hopefully check out a recording or two, and this will lead to your own journey of discovery of this wonderful artist.

With grateful thanks to Georgia Mancio for access to her lecture and research notes, and for lending her ears in listening to, and recommending some of Sheila's albums.

We would like to thank Nick Lea of Jazz Views for his continued support of our work and for contributing this article.



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Photo by Peter Clampitt



Georgia Mancio by Tatiana Gorilovsky



Sheila Jordan
by Michael Jackson



CHARLOTTE
KEEFFE

AND TINY
DAVIS





Charlotte Keeffe by Monika S Jakubowska

"Go
The great fun &
wonderful. musicians
will never forget
your trip the
please same
Iain trip your
see you soon
Bloom
Chicago
Remember the
truly to you



The inspirational and unstoppable (Ernestine Carroll) Tiny Davis, was a trailblazing trumpet player and singer, who first became known as a member of the International Sweethearts of Rhythm band in the 1940s. She led her own band 'Tiny Davis and the Hell Divers', opened her own club with her partner, drummer Ruby Lucas, and even turned down Louis Armstrong when he asked her to tour with him. And yet... not many people know of this incredible artist.

Charlotte Keefe was asked to take part in the brilliant 'Stranger Fruit' project, an online music and discussion series reflecting on the legacies of prominent Jazz and Blues women. Through her exploration of jazz and blues women, she felt pulled to Tiny Davis.

'I'm really proud to be part of the Stranger Fruit concert series and when it came to deciding who to focus on for the session I was leading, I knew I was definitely going to talk about a woman trumpet player, I looked into quite a few - Clora Bryant, Valaida Snow etc - but then I came across Tiny again. I felt a pull towards her, it sounds quite cheesy but there was something that I just felt, and I wanted to go deeper with... I quickly went off and read some more articles online about her and discovered some great YouTube clips, some photos and footage. I fell in love with her. There was something so powerful about this quite frankly small, but mighty woman, I was captivated by her life. I wanted to go deeper, to find out more... and the big thing for me was also discovering that she was a gay woman.'

It's so funny because I'd read about her partner Ruby Lucas and there would be some articles that refer to her as a drummer, some as a bassist, some as a pianist... clearly a rhythm section player!

Tiny was with Ruby for about forty years, up until her death. They set up 'Tiny and Ruby's Gay Spot' in Chicago in the late 1940s, which just seems incredible for two women, two black women - two gay women! I think that where we are now, in 2022, something like this is still a thing! It shouldn't be, but it's still a thing to comment on!

Tiny Davis was definitely the person that I wanted to focus on for my Stranger Fruit concert!

This wonderful clip is an edited version of a documentary by Greta Schiller and Andrea Weiss and gives us a short insight into Tiny and Ruby:

Tiny Davis is sadly another example of a female jazz musician that has not been platformed, supported and discussed

'I think what is quite shocking is the fact that I'm proud of achieving two degrees in jazz, but not once did anybody go, Charlotte you should check out Tiny Davis. I loved the jazz history modules I did, and I've read this and I've read that, but no one ever mentioned Tiny! Yeah, it shocks and surprises me that despite all of the opportunities I've had and I've thrown myself into that there was really little to no mention of women jazz instrumentalists and nobody said anything about gay musicians either, so it was really wonderful to have the opportunity to shoutout about mighty Tiny!'

Charlotte felt a true connection with Tiny in many ways.

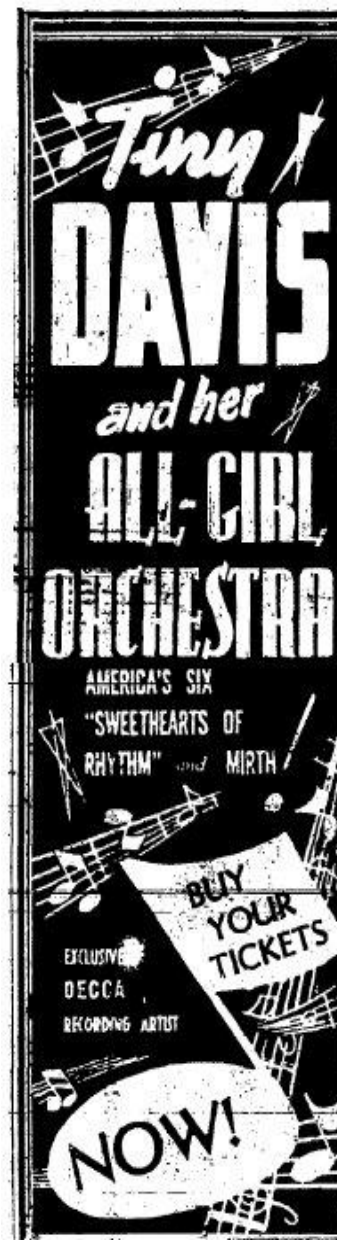
Her trumpet playing is so, so happy, so bright and glorious! That sound! To me that's the definition of happiness, because it's such a glorious sound, that brightness! It's so fun to listen to and you can, of course, hear yearning and crying at times, but it's always so real and vocal and mainly joyful. Her sound is so powerful and direct and that's what I really get from Tiny's playing. I want to say it's like every 'word' that she plays on the trumpet, there is an intention behind it, all the way through. I can really relate to that in my practise and playing with whatever sound I am making, even if it is a rip or a splash, something that's perhaps not quite in the middle of a pitch, there is an intention behind it!

I love watching people perform, do their thing. I love seeing and feeling the intentions behind a note, or a phrase, that really interests me! I really get that, feel that, from Tiny and I can take that into my own playing with my own intentions, delivery. The way that she carries herself on stage -

'no one's going to mess with Tiny'!

So, where do we start our Tiny exploration?

Well, she was called 'the hottest female trumpeter in the universe' and she was a singer as well as a trumpeter, she clearly had such a great, powerful and mighty sense of humour and musicianship - she was a force! She stuck with what she wanted to do, which was 'to play with them gals'. I was reading about how some of the renowned male players of the time would often watch Tiny in the wings... I think it was Louis Armstrong, or the team of folks behind Armstrong, who offered her ten times her weekly salary to go off and tour with him, but she turned it all down... and possibly more than once 'to play with them gals!'



Tiny Davis And Orchestra For Glass Bucket

Tiny Davis and her All-Girl Orchestra will be playing at the Glass Bucket Club for the Christmas Season, supplemented by Ozzie Wilkins and his Glass Bucket Orchestra.

The All-Girl Orchestra open their Yule engagements at the Club on Friday, December 22 and continue on Saturday, December 23.

Christmas morning will also be a big day for the people of Linstead, as Tiny Davis and the All-Girls put on an Xmas morning show at the Theatre Royal. The prices of admission have been made extremely reasonable in order to attract the widest possible audience, as the appearance of this famous American Orchestra is a unique occasion for Linstead in so far as entertainment is concerned.

Reservations for both the Glass Bucket and Theatre Royal performances may be made in advance as from today.

SWING IN THE XMAS with
* TINY DAVIS *
- at -
GLASS BUCKET CLUB
* 2 ORCHESTRAS *
FRIDAY DEC. 22nd
COVER 10/-
SATURDAY 23rd
COVER 15/-

Kingston Jamaica
12/20/50

International Sweethearts of Rhythm - How 'Bout That Jive' featuring Tiny Davis:

Sadly, there is very little information about Tiny Davis, including recordings, so many questions remain unanswered.

'Of course, I'd love to have chatted to her! We really don't know much about her - her his/herstory, how/why exactly she chose the trumpet, her upbringing, her inspirations. I think when it comes to the trumpet, in that particular style, everybody more or less knows of Armstrong, but when it comes to women trumpeter's I think generally people tend to think of more recent times...'

There is, however, a lovely shape to this. Charlotte Keefe, as a female trumpet player who is getting incredible opportunities that Tiny Davis didn't get, is here telling us about this unsung legend. We quite often talk about these incredible women that fought those battles, so that the next generation don't have to.

The International Sweethearts of Rhythm thrived because of the War, afterwards the band disbanded, Tiny went on and created her 'Tiny Davis and the Helldivers' with Ruby Lucas and that's what she continued to do for the rest of her life. She was the first female trumpeter to record on the Decca record label and was performing into the 1980s.

'She really stuck to and with the Hell Divers and turned down these opportunities with the renowned men at the time, and of course things would have been different if she'd said yes to Louis Armstrong for example, and gone around the world with him. But it is really powerful that she didn't do that from many different angles - she obviously wanted to do what she was already doing and had a clear purpose and intention!'

'I just want to play with them gals'.



Isaac Sutton
■ Longhorn Jam Session: Tooting a five-and-a-half-foot, German-built trumpet, 265-pound Tiny Davis joins in Chicago jam session with all-girl combo led by daughter Dorothy, who also plays trumpet. Tiny starred with Sweethearts of Rhythm before opening Chicago club.

Jet Oct 14, 1954

I really want people to know about Tiny! She's part of the history of this music... I want people to know that she was LGBTQ+ too! Checkout the links, see and hear Tiny's presence for yourself... her humour, her boldness, let Tiny inspire you! As a teenager, my bedroom was full of posters of male jazz musicians! Nowadays, a picture of Tiny Davies hangs - it's a reminder that women and LGBTQ+ musicians have always been there too!

What an honour and joy it is to be inspired by Tiny - thank you Tiny!

Do get in touch with us if you have any information and/or photos of Tiny Davis - we would love to hear from you!



To watch Charlotte Keeffe's presentation on Stranger Fruit please click on the image

To find out more about Stranger Fruit,
please click here

To find out more about Charlotte Keeffe,
please click here



Tiny Davis (l.), whose last band failed, is forming all-white girl group. She says lack of hit records hurts girl bands.



▲ Tiny Davis, the trumpet-playing girl bandleader, just made a down payment on a drive-in restaurant in Chicago, her home town.

Jet Apr 16, 1953



▲ Tiny Davis and her all-girl band was stranded for three days by nine feet of snow on a Canadian highway while driving to Quebec. Planes had to parachute food to them.

Jet May 7, 1953



▲ Tiny Davis, girl bandleader, just had her latest record, *That Good Gravy*, banned from the air. Although it has no lyrics, radio officials say it just "sounded too sexy."

Jet Dec 31, 1953

▲ Female bandleader Tiny Davis is selling her Chicago home to city authorities, who condemned the area for a highway. She'll move to New York, where her band will play jazz clubs.

Jet Jun 18, 1959

▲ Tiny Davis, ex-Sweetheart of Rhythm trumpet player, gave up bandleading to open Tiny's Gay Spot Cafe in Chicago. Her teen-age daughter, Dorothy, leads the band at her mother's spot.

Jet Jul 15, 1954



Tiny Davis

SOMETHING NEW





WITH
ESTHER
BENNETT

Photo by Monika S Jakubowska



TWO FOR THE ROAD

Exploring new albums through conversation directly with the artist to share a little insight into their work, Esther Bennett's 'Something New' series. As one of the London Jazz scenes' most experienced, highly respected and widely loved jazz vocalists, Esther juxtaposes sensitivity and a sparky sense of humour in all her work and we are thrilled to have her involved in this new series to help platform new female led jazz releases across the world.

Australian harpist Tara Minton and British double bass player Ed Babar released their new album, *Two for The Road*, in January 2022, via Jazzizit. Esther talks to Tara Minton about her new album.

First things first, let's talk about you two. Tara; you're Australian and Ed is British. Where did you meet and when did you start collaborating musically?

We met in July 2013 at The Ashted Jazz Club. I was invited to play as the guest artist and Ed was in the house band. The AJC is a truly wonderful club run by drummer Tom Early. We played some of my compositions, some standards and really got along. I sort of commandeered Ed and we've been playing together ever since.

You have decided for this latest recording, to follow in the tradition of the jazz greats and make a duo album. What made you choose this format, what are the benefits and what, if any, are the drawbacks?

I have always loved the intimacy of jazz duo records - I feel like you can really hear the relationship between the musicians in the music. 'Beyond the Missouri Sky' is a classic. The harp and the double bass have such a complimentary, sonorous relationship - and the added bonus of being able to travel in one (rather large) car! In my past recordings I relied on piano as the main harmony instrument, so this was an opportunity for me to cast off my training wheels and take full responsibility for the harmony. Being so exposed forced me to confront the limits of my own playing, but it also allowed me a freedom I hadn't had before. It took a lot of work, but Ed is such a wonderful musician and has infinite patience and humour. It really was a joyful process.

In the production of this album you have collaborated with British bass player Geoff Gascoyne and with the record label Jazzizit. Tell us about this collaboration and how different the experience has been compared to self-producing an album.

I cannot sing Geoff Gascoyne's praises enough! From the very beginning he sent repertoire suggestions and arrangements, attended rehearsals via zoom, was the most encouraging, creative presence over the three days of recording at Lightship 95 Studio and put such time and care into the mixing and mastering process. We became great friends working on this album. I've released music with labels before, and to be honest I found it frustrating. There was none of this frustration with Jazzizit - probably because Trudy Kerr is a wonderful jazz musician herself and understands the nature of the music we were trying to create.

Let's talk about the song choices on the album. How did you make them and why? Is there an overall context?

We wanted the record to be a celebration of our friendship, love of touring and travel, but also a reflection of where we were. Geoff's composition "Life In A Bubble" seemed like a fitting choice to open and

close an album that was recorded in the height of the pandemic. Pieces like "Games" by Dorothy Ashby and "On The Sunny Side Of The Street" are playful and reflect the joy of touring, whereas "The Shadow Of Your Smile" and "Jazz Autographs" capture the longing for loved ones who are far away.

We chose a mixture of pieces from The Great American Songbook and what I am calling "The Modern British Jazz Canon" to draw a link between the old tradition and the contemporary British jazz identity - so Norma Winstone, John Taylor, even Paul McCartney were represented in the music we recorded.

You've chosen new and original material but also some timelessly classic jazz standards. I think it's essential that as jazz singers and musicians we do this. Why do

I agree with you completely. There is simply no better education than listening to the old recordings and learning to play the standards. I will be a fan of Henry Mancini until the day I die. He was such an incredible composer. Fred Coots "You Go To My Head" - what a tune! We put our own spin on them, but that's the beauty of jazz. There is such scope to develop your own sound and identity within the old repertoire.

The nature of this album gives more space for the singer and the songs. What singers have influenced you and your style?

Thank you for picking up on the singing. Most people never get beyond the harp! Singers that have influenced me - Ella of course. Lisa Fischer is my favourite living vocalist. She is fearless. She explores all the sounds and textures of the human voice and is a



master technically and artistically. (Lisa if you ever need a harpist, I'm your girl!) I got quite into Beady Belle through Geoff. She sings with real precision and presence. I will always adore Diane Reeves, Esperanza Spalding and Mahalia Jackson is a Goddess. Basically, I'm a "singer's singer." All the vocalists I've listed have an incredible range of textures and colours in their artillery.

Tell us a little about how you work together. How much is pre-arranged? How much is intuitive and how much is improvised? Explain a little about the process and experience of how you work together as a duo.

Some pieces on the record like "Two For The Road" and "Jazz Autographs" were heavily arranged. Ed is an accomplished classical bassist as well as jazzier, so we explored ideas like unison lines between harp and bass or bowing that



Photo by Andrew Porter Music Photography

almost crept into "chamber music" territory. Then pieces like "Blackbird" were simply a chart (granted reharm'd and rearranged) that we played and improvised over as you would any jazz chart. The pieces with Stan were the most free, probably why they're my favourites.

Tell us a little about the musicians you chose and why each particular instrument for each particular track.

Stan Sulzmann guested on "Whirlpool" and "Dream Of The Elders" (renamed "What we Have To Be.") He's played with both John Taylor and Dave Holland (and also David Snell - the great British jazz harpist) and brought real depth to the session. Stan's compositions and sound have had a profound impact on my own writing and development as a musician, so we

were very lucky that he agreed to collaborate with us on these tracks. Lilia Iontcheva is a dear friend and renowned Bulgarian percussionist. She brings such energy and positivity to everything she does - we had to invite her to play on "Games" and "You Go To My Head" and "The Shadow Of Your Smile". She is glittery, colourful glue.

For links to buy 'Two For The Road' and to support Tara and Ed,

[please click here](#)





Emily Francis Trio consists of Emily Francis (Keyboards), Trevor Boxall (Bass) and Jamie Murray (Drums) and their debut album, 2015's *The Absent*, established their fresh take on the piano trio format, creating a sound with a strong emphasis on melody and groove, resulting in compositionally rich, original music. The group have performed extensively across the UK at prestigious jazz festivals and venues including Manchester Jazz Festival, London Jazz Festival and Ronnie Scott's. They launched the new album 'LUMA' at Ronnie Scott's in April 2022.

I'm blown away by your music and the trio. Where you're from? Where and how you learn and study and what you did (music wise) before

Thank you for the kind words! I'm originally from the Wimborne area of Dorset and it was clear from an early age that music was going to be a big part of my life. I formally started playing electronic keyboard at age 7 and saxophone age 9, adding a few extra bits here and there as I went along, such as vocals, classical piano and flute. I tried oboe and clarinet, but they didn't stick! I was always immersed in music coming from a very musical family. My Dad is a great

singer/guitarist and my brothers both played drums and guitar. My secondary school was excellent for all thing's arts related and we would put on professional musicals every year in the local theatre. As well as this I spent many years playing Alto Sax with the Bournemouth and Dorset Youth Jazz Orchestras, which opened up many opportunities, including playing the Royal Albert Hall. In my teens I became obsessed with Quincy Jones and was adamant I wanted to be an arranger/producer, however as an 18 year old I didn't really know what that was supposed to look like as a degree, so I opted for a composition course at London College of Music. After realising all I was doing was hanging with the jazz musicians, I was encouraged to change course and specialise in jazz piano, which was definitely the right move! I was fortunate enough to study piano with both Eddie Harvey and Pete Saberton.

Why these guys? (apart from the obvious - that they're brilliant) What is it about them that suits you and your projects?

Fundamentally we have a shared love of similar music and are always encouraging each other to push beyond the "easy way out". Playing multiple keyboard parts when we could just add more band members is a prime example of that haha!

Emily Francis by Monika S Jakubowska



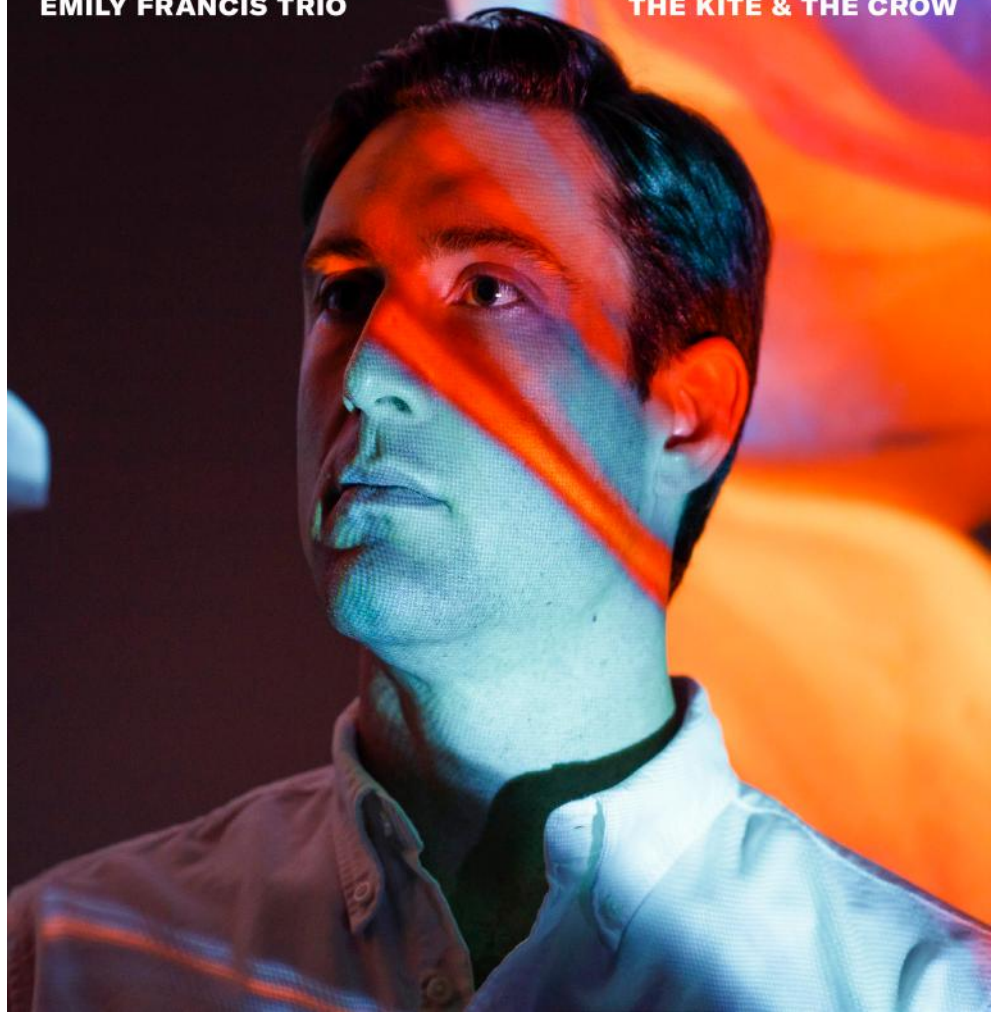
Trevor and I met over 10 years ago playing in wedding bands and dug each other's playing and musical tastes. I had a few people around me that were encouraging me to start my own thing, but it was Trevor that gave me that nudge to fully commit. When Jamie was introduced to us a few years ago, he instantly understood our emerging New York influences and after a lot of hard work and experimentation, I'm proud that we have settled on a very unique sound.

Regarding the prog rock, psychedelia and electronic music influences on this track, what is it about these genres that appeals to you and how do the musical components of these genres relate to jazz?

For me personally, as well as having a strong upbringing on funk and soul, a lot of my school friends and early bands loved rock music and had a particular penchant for all things "fast". Jordan Rudess from Dream Theater was an early influence, however once I discovered Porcupine Tree and Steven Wilson, I was hooked. His influences stem more from the cinematic Pink Floyd side of prog rock, but he's also a big jazz fan, and like most prog, it is not short of extended instrumental sections and improvisation. His keyboard player Adam Holzman also played with Miles Davis and definitely incorporates a Mahavishnu Orchestra style sound with his use of ring modulation. After seeing a rig rundown of his equipment, I knew I had to get myself a mooger fooger ring modulator, which I use live with my wurlitzer. After discovering American jazz keyboardists Jason Lindner (Now vs Now), Adam Benjamin (Kneebody) & Henry Hey (FORQ), I was instantly blown away. I'd never heard keyboards being played like it before.

EMILY FRANCIS TRIO

THE KITE & THE CROW



Their bands had a sound that really resonated with me and after struggling to find a clear voice for our music, suddenly realised that I should embrace my skills as a keyboardist and the experimentation began soon after.

In terms of more historical and obvious jazz influences, I'm hearing - Joe Zawinul, Wayne Shorter and Metheny. Am I right? Can you elaborate upon and/or correct my assumptions?

A lot of people have mentioned Zawinul and I definitely listened to him when I was younger, but I think I was more in the Herbie Hancock & Wayne Shorter camp. I loved the Headhunters and Thrust era stuff, but back then it was mainly all about the funk! I've always really enjoyed playing "Beauty And The Beast" by Wayne Shorter. Metheny is a good spot! He isn't someone I listen to very regularly, but definitely had an indirect influence. My first introduction to Metheny was in my late teens and my teacher at the time encouraged me to learn the tune "In Her Family". I absolutely loved the unexpected harmonic moves, and how the melody has so much space to breathe. More "old school" influences include Count Basie, Bill Evans & Keith Jarrett.

I'm loving the use of different time signatures for 'The Kite & The Crow' track. Can you break those down a bit for the educated listener? We love to know this type of stuff!



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Ok, if you insist! Trev was the main composer of this tune and initially came to me with the bassline and it was an extremely difficult tune to get inside of. It ended up being three different sections all of which had different tempos with changing time signatures within these sections. While it may appear technical on the surface, it is never our intention to write music that is technical for the sake of it, but only as a vehicle to reflect the emotion of the track.

In a nutshell, the time signature changes help to navigate the movement of the downbeat, which I will break down below.

Section 1

The main groove is in 5/8, with an intro bar of 7/8. It then moves between 5/8 and 7/8 with quick flurry of 6/8 too. Although the melody might sound like it's in 3 time, it's simply a cross-rhythm, which is played across the main 5/8 groove, resolving to link up with the 7/8 and 6/8 bars.

Section 2

This section moves between 13/8 and 9/8, with Jamie introducing a 6 time polyrhythm briefly over a 9/8 section. There are a couple of areas of 4/4.

Section 3

Chill time! We settle on 4/4.

[You have said that 'The Kite and The Crow' reflects on the nature of conflict and debate in today's society, which has become increasingly polarized and judgmental. During lockdown we noticed a red kite which kept invading a crow's nesting territory. The invasion by the kite and the subsequent aerial conflict seemed suggestive of the wider reactionary atmosphere and the opposing ideologies that have been exacerbated by the lockdown and social media.' Can you elaborate upon that in terms of musicality, politics or anything else?](#)

I will first explain the literal imagery of the track. Essentially each section represents a different stage of the "battle" between the red kite and the crow. The initial face-off, the aerial scrap and the final resolve as they glide away.

The metaphor is based around conflict in society today, reflecting on our current approach to debate, our tolerance of different ideas, our over-politicization, and the way we become increasingly reactionary and polarised. The kite and the crow are completely different birds but at the end of the day they are both birds and have to navigate the same space, much the same way we do as people with all of our differences. It's interesting as I write this, I'm actually apprehensive to voice my opinions, through fear of any bad judgement of character, but I think that's precisely the issue. Somehow, we feel that the human race has lost its way when it comes to rational debate, hearing differing opinions, and being open to receive each other, especially when social media encourages us to just label and avoid altogether.

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Emily Francis by Monika S Jakubowska





Photo by Anne De Wolff



German-Nigerian soul, jazz and pop singer and singer-songwriter TOKUNBO is a significant presence on the German music scene. Five German Jazz Awards, multiple radio and TV interviews and a host of international tours, she has performed alongside an incredible range of artists including Gregory Porter and Dee Dee Bridgewater. Her new album *Golden Days* is 'a breath of fresh air' and 'a perfect fit for today's time', Paulette Jackson.

It's been lovely listening to your album and finding out all about you. My first question is the obvious one for our readers - tell us about your musical history and career from the beginning? Your collaboration as lead singer with the acoustic soul jazz combo Tok Tok Tok, where you gained many great accolades and awards, to the beginning of your career as a solo artist to the present day.

I began my career as the lead singer of Tok Tok Tok, a band I co-founded during my days as a student at the Academy of Music in Hannover, Germany, with saxophonist Morten Klein. Within a relatively short period of time we went from newcomer to household name within a certain range of jazz listeners. We released 13 albums, toured the world from Spain to Israel, from Turkey to Brazil, from France to Ukraine, and received five German Jazz Awards as well as the Grand Prix Sacem in France.

After 15 years in which we went from creating very unique renditions of rock, soul and pop classics in an unconventional instrumentation to recording our own original material, from playing as a trio without any harmony instrument to working with Grand Orchestra we each had our individual musical ideas and decided to pursue them in separate projects. Thus, my path as a solo artist began. Since then I have recorded three solo albums with my original songs which went on to receive high critical acclaim and several awards.

I am the first artist of colour and the first non-American artist to be awarded the International Acoustic Music Award as Best Female Artist, and most recently, my new album 'Golden Days' has won the Silver Medal at the Global Music Awards. Furthermore, 'Golden Days'

received mass media attention being featured several times on National mainstream tv in Germany. I've played international tours with my albums, been invited to open the show for Gregory Porter and to collaborate with NDR Philharmonic Orchestra. This year I've been appointed to the Jury of the German Jazz Prize as well as the Eurovision Song Contest.

You have been given the illustrious title "Queen of Folk Noir" and the country element of your music is very clear in the song "Ray" but, can you elaborate upon this and your other musical influences? How the new genre and term "Folk Noir" came to be?

Working on my solo debut 'Queendom Come' I was looking for a genre name that would fit the unique mix of filigree folk guitar as well as the slightly dark tones that my first album featured. 'Folk Noir' hit the nail on the head for me. Ever since, my style has evolved in increments and every album displays a different facette of my Folk Noir style, if you will. My sophomore album 'The Swan' was influenced by the birth of my son and most ideas for the songs hit me in weekbed, as crazy as it sounds. I reduced my pace and went with the flow, and it became a wonderfully vulnerable and sweet time and – in spite of the lack of sleep – I felt really inspired. The album became a collection of songs on navigating the transitions we go through in life and you can hear the element of vulnerability in the lightness of the sound.

My new album 'Golden Days' on the other hand was born in the pandemic. As lockdown went on and I realized we were far from returning to anything known to us anytime soon I decided I wanted to emerge from this crisis with new music and a new album. And so, I started writing in every spare moment I could find next to my caring responsibilities for our small child. I would retreat to our little garden cottage whenever possible, often in the dead of night, to work on the songs.

Not only was I adamant about writing this album but also about creating something positive and hopeful in this period of unprecedented challenge. Thinking of Toni Morrison's quote 'Write the book you want to read' I asked myself what my ideal soundtrack would be and might that be something the world needs now. Which is why 'Golden Days' is much more uplifting than my previous

albums. It is yet another shade of Folk Noir, warmer and lighter.

Let's talk about the musicians you have chosen to work with for this album - who are they, what your musical history and relationship with them is and why are they special to you and your music.

When I set out to write and produce my solo debut, I teamed up with two old friends of mine, guitarist Ulrich Rode and drummer Matthias 'Maze' Meusel with whom I studied at the Academy of Music. Ever since, I've been accompanied by them in the process of creating the songs and the sound that I envision for my albums. After beginning the song writing journey for 'Golden Days' alone, the three of us worked intensely on completing the song writing for the album together. Both are exceptional composers, arrangers and producers whose conviction it is to bring out my strengths and sweet spots.

Ulrich is a master when it comes to guitar sounds. He develops sound textures with much love for detail. And while he always has a playful arrangement idea up his sleeve, he always keeps the overarching concept in mind. With his guitar parts he sets the perfect tone and atmosphere giving the songs maturity.

Matthias is dedicated to bringing out the essence of a song through strong melodies, both within vocal and instrumental parts. Furthermore, he has created a unique drum sound for each of my albums, and on 'Golden Days' he uses unconventional percussion elements in his rhythm arrangements which amalgamate with Christian Flohr's bass line hooks.

Christian was our bass player with Tok Tok Tok, and it's safe to say I've been playing with him almost all my adult life including all the world tours we played.

Multi-instrumentalist Anne de Wolff makes my team complete. With the many instruments she plays from strings to trombone, from reed organ to vibraphone she adds shimmering colours to the canvas of my songs. Not only does working with these exceptional musicians make me feel like a child in a toy store, moreover, I'm playing with my sand pit buddies, and touring as well as the album

productions feel like a trip to summer camp. My band's support especially since becoming a mother has enabled me to move forward in the way that I have in the last years.

Listening to your album, it's clear that home and the people in and from it, mean a lot to you. (I'm particularly enjoying the track "Home Again" at the moment). Tell us more about home - past and present, places and people - exactly what does mean to you and how it has influenced your music and song writing?

Collecting the lyrics and stories for 'Golden Days' during the first lockdown I kept revisiting memories, or let's say they kept revisiting me - it's what most frequently came up in the situation of isolation. 'Home Again' travels back to a childhood friendship that slips away. The song is brim-full with images that I connect with a sense of home and security, something I felt was needed in the challenging times that we were dealing with.

Growing up on two continents, Africa and Europe, and traveling between the two cultures of my parents I had to create my own definition of home. After feeling torn between two very different worlds I actually found the answer to my inner query of where I belonged in the US, where I spent a year as an exchange student. There, it dawned on me that rather than feeling that I have to decide between the cultures of my parents, I could embrace the fact that I have the best of both worlds and more within me: I am everything I want to be. And I am equipped with the ability to find a sense of home within every place on this planet if I choose to, and most importantly, within myself.

Thus, is also the message of my album 'Golden Days': even when we are facing the ultimate challenge and when we are confronted with the absolute unknown we can find strength and regain a feeling of security in the memory of intense positive experiences and important relationships within our lives. 'Where are the Golden Days? Maybe they're near, maybe they're here.'

TOKUNBO



Your songs and their lyrical and storytelling narrative suggest (to me) a great love for literature and poetry as well as for song writing. Is this correct? Which songwriters have influenced you most and who, if any, are your heroes from the world of literature and poetry?

Literature and poetry have indeed had a substantial influence on my writing. When writing the lyrics for my album 'The Swan' I had just read Bob Dylan's autobiography 'Chronicles 1', a masterpiece of poetic writing to me. It spurred me on to let poetry bleed into my own writing, starting with the album title which was inspired by the fairy tale 'The Seven Swans' and touches on the album's theme of transition. 'Headlights' from that album is full of references to Shakespeare. And when writing the lyrics to 'White Noise', a politically driven song we wrote at

the beginning of the Trump era, I was looking for an imagery that would reflect the sensation of bewilderment after the 2017 election in a subtle way without hitting on the obvious. I found that imagery in the upside-down world in 'Alice in Wonderland'.

Besides my gravity towards poetry I am passionate about stories that take you through the keyhole right into a situation in a relatable way. The author Paul Auster and particularly his 'Brooklyn Follies' has been an influence in this style of storytelling which I envisioned for 'Golden Days'.

Naturally, Paul Simon is one of the greatest storytellers, he never fails to take me on a journey, and I listened to his album 'Still crazy after all these years' a lot. Country music is all about relatable storytelling and has been an influence in that aspect as well. I've been inhaling the music of Johnny Cash, Sheryl Crow, Alison Krauss and also Ray LaMontagne.

In terms of musical influences for 'Golden Days' we had the great songwriters of the 70s in mind when we set out to complete the songs, especially The Carpenters, James Taylor and Carol King with their classics.

Being of dual nationality and born of a Nigerian Father and German mother - clearly English will not be the only language you speak. Have you explored song writing and singing in any other language or languages? Tell us about this and how you feel their flavours, patterns and moods differ from the English language and if you think they may have influenced your song writing either consciously or subconsciously.

I do feel at home in quite a few languages. I used to sing Jobim's Bossa Nova songs in Portuguese which I loved - the sound of the language is simply beautiful. I've also sung in Spanish both in a salsa band as well as a band covering songs by the Flamenco pop group Ketama. That was a long time ago and though I enjoyed it very much, at one point I wanted to focus on singing in a language I could express my own lyrics in without boundaries.

I've been revisiting singing in different languages over the years, though. At one of our concerts with Tok Tok Tok I sang a song by Jaques Brel on French national radio. And I decided to give my fans in France, Brazil and Portugal a gift by recording my song 'Cast Away' in French as well as Portuguese. I am very proud of these renditions and I've always enjoyed surprising my audience by singing in their respective language when I was on tour in different countries.



Photo by Anne De Wolff

The question that I (and I'm sure everyone who listens to it) wants to know is - Who is it you are singing about in the track 'House of Cards' ? It's such a beautiful and deeply heartfelt lyric with an intriguing narrative. Of course, if it's intensely personal and you prefer not to say then, all privacy will be respected.

'House of Cards' was actually inspired by actor and comedian Jim Carey's commencement speech at MIT. I was really moved when he spoke of how he became a comedian, living the dream his father had buried and how hard it is to let your armour go and not to fulfil the role that people identify you with. I've observed this sensation universal to what many artists go through. When there is an overall expectation to permanently be the persona you are known for in the public – it can be hard to find that moment or that place where you feel safe to just be yourself.

Finally - when can we see you perform this album live in London and England?

Having spent much time as a child visiting with close friends in Britain – my parents met in Cornwall – it would be one of my greatest dreams come true to tour in Britain and naturally, to perform 'Golden Days' in London.

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Photo by Anne De Wolff



DEANNA WITKOWSKI



Photo by Erika Kaplin



WENDY KIRKLAND TALKS TO DEANNA WITKOWSKI ABOUT JAZZ, PIANO AND MARY LOU WILLIAMS

Your book has won the JJA Biography/Autobiography of the year! Amazing news! Could you tell us how you came to write it?

I was approached by the publisher Liturgical Press, a small Catholic publisher who wanted a volume on Mary Lou Williams as part of a series of biographies. They found me online from some other articles I had written on Mary Lou in the past so because I have been playing Mary Lou's music for a long time, since about two thousand, and doing a lot of research on her kind of intermittently, so the book project really led me to her hometown of Pittsburgh which is where I'm sitting right now! I was in New York for 23 years. A crazy thing is after I bought my house about a year ago, it took me a while to realise that I am exactly a mile from Mary Lou's grave site. I have visited several times, just walked there with the GPS on my phone, so she has really been a big part of my life for a long time and even more so in the last five years since the book project started.

What first sparked your interest in Mary Lou Williams?

Back in 2000 the late pianist and educator Dr Billy Taylor invited me to play at the Mary Williams Women in Jazz Fest at the Kennedy centre and I knew of Mary Lou's reputation as a great jazz pianist, composer and big band arranger, but I didn't know any of the music so I felt a responsibility to at least start checking out her music. There was a new biography that had just come out at that time called Morning Glory by Linda Dahl that I read and I got to the section that talked about how in the 60s when Mary Lou started writing liturgical music she wrote three jazz masses and I was just shocked because I had just written my first jazz mass for

church, an Episcopal church in New York City where I was working as music director. So that was the point that really led me in; then I started checking out her sacred music that has never been commercially released that was at her archives at Rutgers University at the Institute of Jazz Studies. Also, trumpeter Dave Douglas had just released a tribute record to Mary Lou called Soul on Soul.

I had met him at a jazz workshop at the Banff Centre for Arts in Canada. I just contacted him and said can you recommend some Mary Lou Williams recordings that are essential ones I should checkout? So he emailed me, I don't remember exactly what he emailed but I know one of the first records I checked out was owning her record from 1974 and that's still one of my favourite recordings of hers and what I found was I was just amazed that she had such a huge stylistic breadth and depth and her music was very rooted in the Blues but also harmonically very open. I really related to all of this you know as a composer and a pianist who came to jazz from not listening to jazz growing up.

Now, how about your own path in jazz? How did you begin?

I was a classical pianist and a classical piano major, an undergrad and I started playing jazz in college so I've had a lot of different influences in my music but I also really appreciated Mary Lou's conversion story which, when she converted to Catholicism in midlife, which is something that I also did late, in 2008 or 9, so there's just all these things that we share in common.

I found myself looking to Mary Lou more and even just talking to her and asking especially when for instance doing certain things from the book research brought me here to Pittsburgh a lot more. I started getting asked to do William

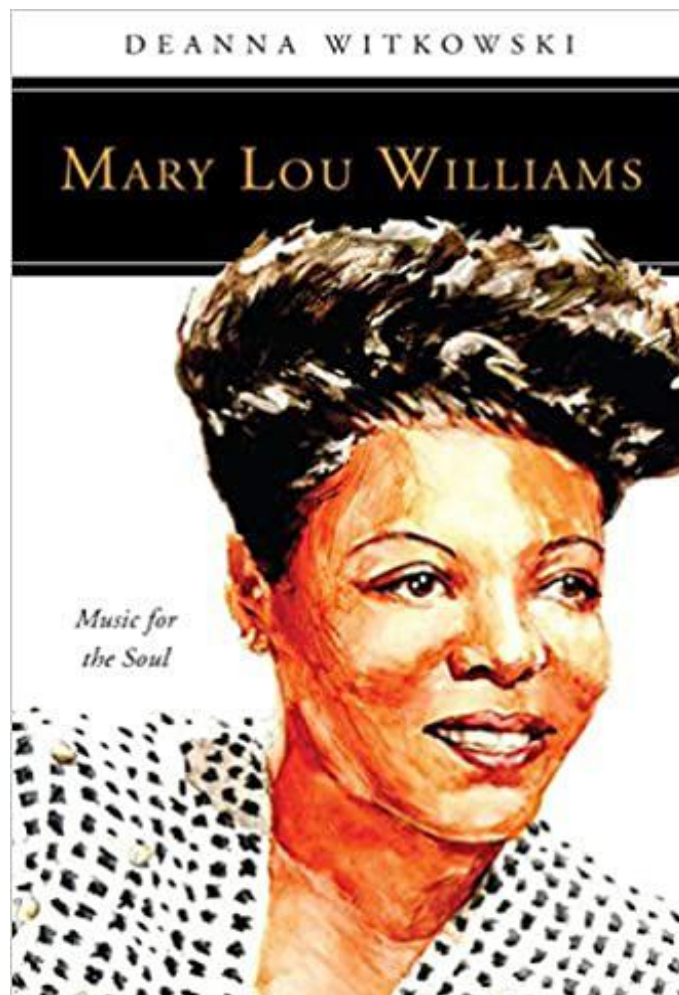
Centre performances here - I played with the Pittsburgh Symphony here as a featured guest doing some of her music and I just kept feeling a warmth and welcome here in Pittsburgh that I really was I think longing for. I asked myself what would life be if I live in Pittsburgh? I came here for seven weeks in the fall of 2019, so, pre-pandemic, to do more research and to get to know the jazz community here. After that I decided I wanted to move here so I applied for a PhD programme in jazz studies at the University of Pittsburgh and was accepted. I am in my second year of that. I also was able to do a recording that just came out called *Force of Nature* that features pretty much all Mary Lou's compositions, so I feel that wouldn't necessarily have happened the way that it did if I had not been in Pittsburgh, so I really credit Mary Lou for leading me here.

I graduated from college in 1993 and I played in my last two years of high school in Western New York outside of Rochester NY in our high school jazz band. I remember knowing that you were supposed to do something more than play what was written on the sheet music, but I was not listening to jazz that much so I did not have a language for what to do.

Going back a step, how did you originally become interested in jazz?

I had a couple of friends who took me to the Eastman School of Music which has a great jazz programme and one of the first concerts I saw was a big band jazz ensemble concert by contemporary writers. There is a great jazz composition programme at Eastman. I was just blown away by seeing soloists improvising without necessarily looking at the piece of paper but also by how interesting harmonically all the writing was informed wise. I had all this in my head as something I was attracted to, but no one was telling me go listen to Mary Lou Williams or Bill Evans or Errol Garner, or Ahmad Jamal. When I started undergraduate at Wheaton College outside of Chicago, I knew I was interested in jazz. We didn't have any jazz piano tuition at the school; there was a big band led by Larry Panella, a great tenor saxophonist, I had also played classical flute pretty seriously, and I knew that flute and saxophone had similar fingerings and that Larry was the jazz person at Wheaton, so I just asked if I could study Alto saxophone with him in my second semester freshman year.

He was first person who told me go checkout this Charlie Parker record for instance. Cannonball



Adderley was a substantial influence right at the beginning and I went to the library every weekend and took out the required sounds; I did not know who the musicians were but then I heard Oscar Peterson on a Verve double record called the Astaire story with Fred Astaire singing and tap dancing with the Peterson trio and I thought wow! I love this, it makes me feel happy and the interaction was so joyful.

After a couple of years of studying saxophone, I ended up playing lead Alto in our jazz ensemble. I took jazz piano lessons outside of school; I drove into Chicago every week to take lessons. We did not have combos every semester and I knew that I had to play with a bass player and a drummer to be able to get a decent swing feel, so I went to Benedictine University that had community jazz.

So, you began as a saxophonist. What turned you on to the piano?

I started my jazz piano lessons with the pianist Brad Williams who was still in Chicago - a talented player who was on the road with Woody Herman. That is when I realised this is what I want to do. At first, I was a little bit shy about speaking up when I



did not understand something he played. For instance he would say: here is a major seven chord, let's find fifteen ways to voice it across different registers of the piano. Back then I had a cassette recorder, so I recorded every single lesson and I tried to figure out everything he played. I was spending so much time trying to keep everything up, but I was I just really immersed myself as much as I could. Right after I graduated, I went to DePaul University in Chicago, and I did not finish my programme there; I went in for a Master's in Jazz Studies and then later I finished this at City College of New York.

Those first couple of years were intense. The wonderful thing about Chicago was I was playing quite a bit from the very beginning; I was going to jam sessions every weekend meeting people. It was really a very conducive environment for learning, getting experience on the bandstand. So, this was my beginning in jazz!

Now let's talk a little bit about your recording which includes some of Mary Lou's work.

My recording, Force of Nature has eleven Mary Lou compositions on it plus the title track, an original and then a few other pieces she played. It is doing super well right now radio wise, it's number 14 on the top 50 most played new jazz releases on JS radio nationwide here right now, plus I just got a nice Downbeat review...I've been working as a professional jazz musician for a really long time and this is my - wait a minute - 7th recording and this is the first time I've got an overview in Downbeat, so it finally feels there's some recognition happening. Also, because the way we are promoting the record, even in the press release it also talks about it being a companion piece to the book though it is not necessarily parallel. There is a lot of interest in the book too, so I have been doing more virtual book readings and performances.

I am going to New Orleans to do both a reading at one venue and then trio at Snug Harbour at the main

club there. What I want to have happened more is touring - with COVID so many artists have been rescheduled. I am doing something that just got booked for next March in Kansas. Mary Lou was a huge part of the Kansas City music scene when she was with Andy Kirk and His Twelve Clouds of Joy in the 30s, so that is going to be cool.

What are you going to do next?

I am also trying to find more people who can be a part of my team. I do not have a booking agent yet and I am working on that and some huge things that have changed from me besides moving from New York to Pittsburgh.

One thing was really through my fans. I left my piano in New York as I had an upright that was good for what it was and had for a very long time but it wasn't really even worth moving here and so I fundraised primarily through

an e-mail newsletter about twice a month and then on social media and doing a go fund me page. And through my fans I raised \$25,000 to purchase a rebuilt Steinway B which is a 7 foot piano. It cost \$30,000 so basically my fans bought me a piano!

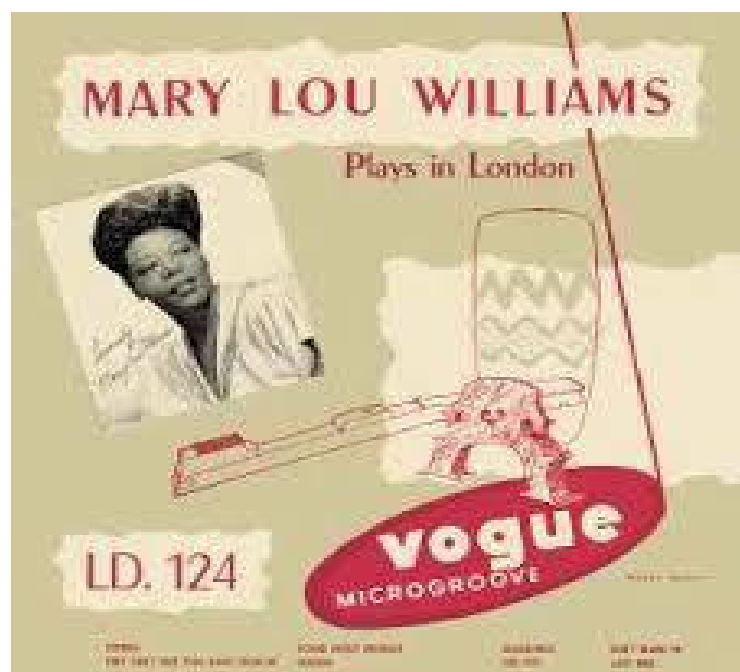
That continues to be a huge change and that is also a unique part of my story is that I have this level of support. One thing I have really tried to bring out in the book is networks of support that Mary Lou created through letter writing and through her friendships that she cultivated with nuns when she went on spiritual retreat, she would often befriend a nun and then they would start a letter correspondence.

She got the first Pittsburgh Jazz Festival to happen partially through writing letters to the Catholic diocese who ended up sponsoring the festival. I feel there's part of my mission to really retell jazz history in a different way now, because I think we often miss a lot of stories and obviously women are often overlooked, but it's important rather than just see individuals to see the communities that they interacted with and how the communities influenced their livelihood and help them to create their work. I very much feel that has been a huge part of my story too.

It sounds like Pittsburgh is the place to be for all things Mary Lou! What discoveries did you make when you first moved there?

One of the things I noticed when I started spending time in Pittsburgh before I had moved here and I would talk to people about the research I was doing and even with jazz musicians you know professional jazz musicians, a lot of them would say "Oh yeah, she was a great mentor for..." and then list all the famous musicians like Monk and Bird and Dizzy and to me what I think has happened with her without conscious design on anyone's part necessarily, is that it takes time and it takes work to get into somebody's music especially if their music isn't as commercially available as others.

So, it is easier for us to look to recordings that are more readily available, but the problem is when we centre recordings in the way we tell history we miss a lot of other potentially important things or other venues that were not the Village Vanguard. They were community centres or churches. With Mary Lou she was not as recorded as some of the other people who she mentored.



She also, when she came to New York in 1943, which was right around the same time when there was a recording ban for two years, so we do not even have records of what her first quintet with Art Blakey sounded like. There were certainly mismanagement and business issues and royalties she did not get that she was always fighting to get - she was constantly facing uphill battle.

One of the remarkable things about Mary Lou for researchers who are telling her story, is that she saved everything. She saved the little notebook she would carry with her and write down how much she spent on anything during the day.

She had a prayer list of nine hundred names that she took with her to church; at the beginning of her conversion process, she tried to pray for every single person on the list which took a long time!

She also has all her letters...of course it's more seeing letters back to her, rather than the letters from her except for people who may be donating to the archive, but that's where I think I've really seen her struggles and her confiding in certain friends and also her planning, trying to get to Rome to do her second mass which she did, but her constant work because it's not just her musical output. Her labour was trying to get all these different things to come to fruition.

I know all of us have stories about the first jazz albums we owned! What is yours?

When I started learning about jazz history I did not learn about Mary Lou. I learned this sort of succession; if we talked about pianists, I learned a specific succession and what records I was supposed to go checkout. This was great at the beginning when I was getting into jazz; I bought an old record player and I got vinyl for \$2 each. I got a ton of Oscar Peterson because he released lots of records.

Everything was two dollars but that is what drives you in, is the sound. But then when you are starting to learn about history you need their sheet music. I get requests all the time from people saying, "Where did you find the music you recorded on your record?" meaning written scores and I have to say I transcribed a lot of it, some of it was transcriptions that I got permission from another person to use and then I arranged it.

I did a new performance edition of Mary Lou's third mass for the Mary Lou Williams foundation which is now the edition that they are licencing for people to use, but there is still not a well-known pathway or tunnel where people can say, here is where I get the Mary Lou lead sheets.



That is something that we need to have so that musicians will play her tunes on stage and recognise that part of Mary Lou sounds Monk and it is actually the other way around! Those are the kind of things that are never going to be really known unless people start playing music and seeing how it is just as adaptable and usable and relevant as a Monk or Dizzy tune.

Do you have any examples of Mary Lou's pre-eminent recordings being adopted by the jazz fraternity?

In 1944 or 45, Mary Lou recorded an arrangement she did of Gershwin's Lady Be Good and that arrangement where she wrote a new melody over the A sections is the same melody as what in 1952 or something that Monk recorded as Hackensack.

A lot of jazz musicians know that's Mary Lou's melody. Coleman Hawkins played tenor sax the year later he recorded that and that same riff and called it Riptide. I still think some researchers and big jazz historians know that's Mary Lou's arrangement, but most jazz people think of it as Hackensack. I think you might think of it as Coleman Hawkins but not many know that was that was Mary Lou's idea so that's the kind of stuff that I think is also I mean again to me it's putting figures in a larger context not just saying oh Mary Lou is the mentor to all the famous people, it's OK. Well that's great but if you don't know how she mentored them or how she influenced them...

Also, especially with the whole gender thing it becomes "oh she was the 'mother' for all these people" and there is nothing wrong with that, but it is not getting into her music or her work.

As a female jazz pianist, taking the classical academic route, do you have any insights as to the gender balance in these institutions?

I think back to when I went to college, and I thought I was going to be a classical concert pianist and I still play classical music; one of my recordings is all improvising with Chopin pieces and mixing them with Brazilian music and stuff, so I do my own thing with it but I still love playing straight Mozart sonatas and now that I have a great piano it is just fun.

I was in high school and looking at colleges I do not remember thinking that I had met no women in the piano faculty at the institutions at which I was auditioning. If I was that same age now and I was looking at colleges seeing ads and jazz magazines or the guide to all the

jazz education, it is still a male majority and if there is one female mail on the faculty it is the person who is doing the vocal course.

It is frustrating seeing more photos where we have the woman playing bass or trumpet which is great but still for the most part, I see big bands and they are still majority male.

I think that that to me, that is an issue of who you see on the faculty. That is a massive thing; it is discouraging if you do not see people who look like you and there are still so many aspects of it that are very macho and competitive, or it can be.

If there is a group of people, in a certain way, they are going to interact and if they have that someone that was not in that kind of circle, not going to be privy to it, so I think it affects opportunities and it affects things that you can't necessarily articulate or see directly but I think it's a real problem.

We would like to say a huge thank Deanna for talking to us about her work and of course Mary Lou Williams! Keep an eye out for our 'On The Bookcase' podcast, where Deanna will soon be a guest!

To follow and support Deanna's work please visit her website ***here***



Photo by Jason Gardener

Photo by Jason Gardener





NATALIE GREFFEL AND THE XJAZZ FESTIVAL





Photo by Eike Walkenhorst

Photo by Eike Walkenhorst



NATALIE GREFFEL

THE TRUE ART OF CURATION

Award-winning recording artist, instrumentalist, composer and arranger Natalie Greffel has just added a significant achievement to her already inspired portfolio - curator of the XJazz Festival. Born in Mozambique, raised in Denmark and living in Berlin, she brings a wealth of experience to the role and her vision for the industry is one that we should all follow.

As Natalie was reaching the end of her formal studies, the founder and festival director of X Jazz, Sebastian Studnitzky immediately connected to Natalie's work while judging her final exam, booked her for performances and eventually asked her to join the team as a curator for this year's festival. The result was a visionary portfolio of artists. Stunning musicianship and artistry and a rarely seen beautifully diverse programme.

We are all aware of the many discussions about gender balanced festival line ups across the world and the X Jazz festivals programming is arguably the most beautifully diverse schedule I have ever had the pleasure to see. But the gender and diversity balance is not only related to on the stage and there are few female curators. I spoke to Natalie about her role as one only a few female curators and if she felt any pressure.

I think it was more about black curators for me, as a black person. I think that in Berlin at least, and it's a harsh thing to say, but I think at least in music and jazz, it's a lot of white men playing music which, we're in Europe, so it makes sense. I had some experience of curating before and that's when I really started thinking about how do I want to curate, if I do curate and that was more about setting it up in a way that I was

doing more than I should have, but just to make sure that the artists were seen. And that's some thing that I think also the people from the XJAZZ noticed and they were like, this is exciting, how she's like presenting artists... and so I'm just bringing that energy.

And what energy! Natalie is inspiration. Talking to her, you cannot help but get caught up in her excitement, passion and strength. For a musician, the process for being selected for a Jazz festival is something that is not always transparent and rarely openly discussed. There is little training for music curators, and it seems to be a learning on the job type of role. Natalie and I discussed her process and what her vision was.

I centred on my own experience honestly. I've toured quite a bit and so I know what I would love to see and what I'm missing, and I think a lot of things can be changed. I think everybody is doing a great job, but I also think there needs to be more flexibility and more perspectives, it's important. And being a black person, a black queer woman in Germany, there are a lot of things that I often felt were missing. A way of working for me has been too really manifest it in my headfirst and then when I get asked to do things, I can think about that. Also you know most of my friends here, that are black, are also artists so we talk about this a lot, privately, so I bring all of that forward when I'm thinking about curating - what is it that is missing, what is that I'm not seeing and what is it that we want to see?

So, for me it is a lot about trying to see - what have I seen here before that was great and where can I offer things that are different, you know?

Coming from a musician's perspective, Natalie is at one with the artists and her experience, as a musician has proved invaluable. She cares about the experience the artists have.

I don't know about other curators but for me personally I've been having meetings with them, I've talked with the people who are coming, I check in on them and I make sure that if anything is needed, they can contact me. I feel, as an artist myself - you have to write to the festival and then you get some kind of e-mail and you don't know who it is and for me I'm like, OK, actually I have nothing to do with that particular space but I'm still going to contact you because I know that a lot of artists that come through are not always feeling safe in different spaces and socially.

For the people I am curating and the people that I see coming through, I can reach out to and make sure that I put extra effort into making sure that they have information, or if they need something. I was just hanging out with Melanie Charles just now and I'm not curating her - I wish I did - because I know her but I reached out to her personally and I said if you need something, let me know, because you know that kind of relationship, it's important.

It's like a very delicate dance because usually if you complain about something then the festival, the next year will be like we're not booking you ever again... so that power dynamic is very available and I think for a lot of people and in this case, if we talk about women in this context, that can be very unsafe, black people and that also includes black women, that's a whole different demographic that comes together, trans people, so all of these people that actually coming to create things from a certain disadvantage, feel very unsafe and they come with the experience of having had very bad experiences. So, I'm trying to bring in my level of awareness into how I connect with the people.

Natalie's lived experience covers many areas and brings a wealth of knowledge. Born in Mozambique, she then moved to Denmark and now lives in Berlin.

The culture shock was real! I was raised by my mother who is Mozambican and being raised by an African woman in a white society in Denmark, there are whole worlds going in each experience that my parents brought into my life. I think that it's kind of like a blessing and a curse at the same time because I'm pretty flexible in different, not all, cultures but

many cultures but at the same time, there is also adapting and kind of getting lost in like who am I supposed to be? But that's just my experience and can be a little bit tricky but it helps me move through places faster definitely. I speak four languages now so that also makes it easy for me to move around depending on where I am. I tend to move into the places where I can speak in the language.

As well as curating the festival, Natalie has been working hard on her new release, which came out, almost immediately after the festival. There is a beautiful synergy within her role as a curator and her own music. Her passion for creating a safe and welcoming space for musicians as a curator comes from her own spatial awareness. I asked Natalie how about those two roles have influenced each other.

I've not really thought about that...but I think that comes together with the project that has just come out. I wanted to not only curate artists, I wanted to curate projects for myself. So, I created this series, constellations I call them, called New Pass, and I'm working with different black artists about the topics that we want to deal with.

I think there is a lot of my upbringing and my awareness was based in US, which is great, but also, being raised in Denmark, where was that narrative? And being in Germany...? It exists but I wasn't really introduced to it. I always felt when I was studying music, I go to school to learn jazz, which is black peoples music, but then I'm taught by white people and if I want to go and do something that feels good to my connection as a black queer person, I have to go to the queer clubs but none of that music is in the way that I do. So, I was very torn about that space. I feel like I want to curate that space. We need more, and when I say we, I mean the artist themselves,

We need more spaces to also deal with topics and music that connects to us.

What questions do we have and usually don't get to deal with? Whatever set skills we bring into this; can we create music that deals with topics we want to talk about?

Natalie not only asks these questions essential as a curator but in her own music and her brilliant new release with the New Past collective is described as:



'Both political engagement and artistic practice, NEW PAST gathers an ever-evolving group of creatives to wield music as a powerful tool – bringing the artists involved and listeners alike to (re)learn our global and personal pasts, and strengthen our visions for alternative futures based on self-determination, diversity, and accountability...Through music that merges experimental electronics, troubling smooth jazz, compulsive rhythms, and more, this iteration of New Past weaves a remarkable musical and mythological journey to creatively interrogate how privilege influences the construction of our individual selves and society at large'

I asked Natalie about this fascinating project.

It's two EPS that become a CD, so it's like a construction and deconstruction. I think personally, I'm going to speak for myself because what we put into this is that anyone who explores it and has an exchange can make of it as they wish. I live in this privileged western society but I also have a lot of connections to my family in Mozambique and I have a whole different universe in history that goes into those but how do I navigate that privilege and disadvantage... and also the coercion with certain types of systems that I'm not supposed to be part of but I still am. It's like influx intersectionality's of that space and so how can I talk about that in a way that is not intellectualised you know? I just feel that we can learn from books but we can also learn through music, so how can I create things that have an emotional intelligence and how can I just let it come in a way that isn't too intellectualised but has a lot of depth to it.

We wanted to basically deal with the experience of privilege, whatever that feels like, because I feel that it's been very hyper intellectualised, and everybody has a kind of language for it but how do we feel it? So, we created like a universe if you will, realms that are inspired by northern mythology, which is my heritage also and created these musical universes for each God that we presented. Each God represents a privilege and kind of taking that experience of like the God complex and giving it different roles.

If I can experience the privileged experience, of feeling privilege, how does that feel? How can I process that space? What does that sound like? How can I listen to myself, feel that space?

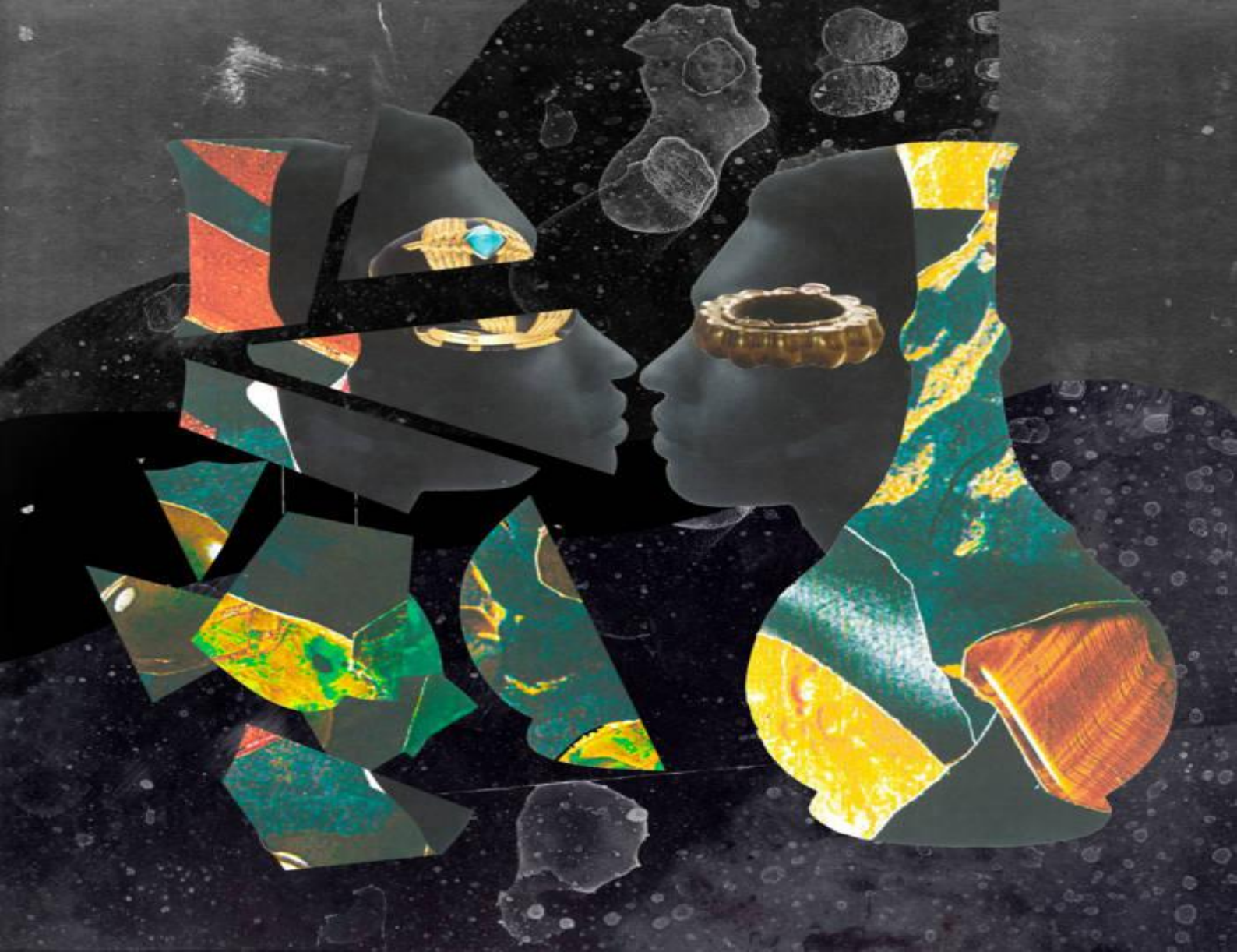


Natalie's new album is out now, and I highly recommend you not only explore it, but follow the whole portfolio of work of this incredible artist.

Natalie Greffel is captivating, powerful and truly inspiring. These qualities come out of the depth of her understanding about her experiences so far and the questions that come out of those experiences that not only she wants to explore, but questions the world also needs to ask and hopefully one day, answer.

Interview by Fiona Ross

To follow and support Natalie's work,
please [click here](#)



Nubya Garcia by Agatha Powa at XJazz Festival, Berlin 2022







MIRIAN ARBALEJO

RE-WRITING THE WORLD OF JAZZ JOURNALISM

BY
ISABEL MARQUEZ

In April this year, jazz journalist, critic, and fellow Women in Jazz Media team member Mirian Arbalejo became the first woman to receive the prestigious Makila de Honor. Previously the award has been given to various Spanish luminaries such as celebrated flamenco guitarist Paco de Lucia and Juan Claudia Cifuentes, AKA Cifu, the master to jazz criticism in Spain. From her dedication to her professional and academic career, to her admirable passion for the arts and humanities, Arbalejo's 20-year long career has been driven by her excellence. Her various degrees in classical Spanish and Greek studies galvanised her enthusiasm for writing, which, along with a love for poetry and music, led her to commence her successful career in jazz journalism. Arbalejo became the first Spanish critic to join the jazz magazine Downbeat's veterans' panel and is a member of the NPR Music Jazz Critics Poll, run by Francis Davis. She is also a valued member of the Jazz Journalists Association.

Speaking with me recently in a Zoom interview, Arbalejo further discussed what it meant to win such an incredible award:

I have been the first woman to receive the Makila de Honor, and that, from my point of view, was one of the most exciting things... There now is a woman being recognised for her work on such a big scale. It's the first time it's happened in Spain and it's so important because Spain feels like it's behind everyone else regarding women in jazz, both with female jazz musicians and those who write about jazz.

With the Women in Jazz Media team, we won the Parliamentary Jazz Award in 2021, and in a way, that I can believe. But this award, from my country, never would I have thought it would happen to me. I was really grateful because someone is giving value to my work. I've been working for 22 years, but I've never had a place in my country... I'm always collaborating with other countries.

Arbalejo went on to describe, in her own words, her achievements throughout her career:



I've been collaborating for a number of years with Downbeat, but not just Downbeat. I've worked with lots of different people and publications. I recently learnt that I'm now on the Downbeat Veterans Committee, which is very important too.

Arbalejo's education and musical background coalesced when she decided to become a journalist. Her multiple disciplines, including Latin, Greek and Ancient studies illustrate her devotion to and curiosity for learning new things. But whilst she immersed herself in the humanities, she emphasised her love for music from a young age.

I've always been involved with music. I sang in the choir with other children and since then, I've always been singing... But then I thought, I want to write about jazz, as I was already writing. So, I decided to study jazz harmony, theory, and vocal jazz.

I started writing 22 years ago about jazz and haven't stopped since.

Throughout our interview I wanted to know what it was like to be a female journalist in the Spanish jazz scene. Arbalejo outlined what the jazz scene was like in Spain, and the state Spanish journalism and arts criticism was in at the time.

In Spain, around that time, it was the beginning of a bad time and place for the arts and critics. It's a systemic problem in which the arts have been side-lined and that was the moment when arts and critics were disappearing from the media and press. So, I started writing online about jazz and the music I was witnessing. I'm fortunate to be a witness to things that have happened in Madrid, it's been a privilege.

It's complex because I guess every woman has a different story, but it's been really hard for jazz women. The scene is not what it should be, we are trying hard to get there, but it's always about the same thing: personal decisions made by the people with the power to make them. This includes event co-ordinators, programmers etc. They make the dec-



-isions. In Spain, it's been difficult to find a woman in these kinds of positions. It's not only about diversity, but also about showing the reality of jazz, as a music that reaches out to everyone.

If events aren't diverse, then we are missing the point of jazz.

Arbalejo also further emphasised how she has found herself collaborating with more international media outlets, rather than Spanish run platforms. It was upsetting to hear that she felt like she couldn't find her place in the Spanish arts journalism scene.

I've been having a conversation about women in jazz for years, but this conversation is always somewhere else and not in Spain. We need to have a healthy and professional conversation about how it should be in jazz. If I only see men in a programme, I usually write to the person running the event and raise the issue. Many times, they've just ignored me, although I know them. Once I wrote about this in Jazz in Europe, and I was targeted for trying to have the conversation. That can't happen anymore to anyone. Not one woman should have to go through that.

I couldn't help but ask Arbalejo what her plans were for the future and where she saw her career going next, after winning such a life-changing award. I was also intrigued about whether she could see herself writing for more Spanish-based publications in the coming years.

I guess I want my next project to work, because it's exactly what I've always wanted to do. My fight is in the Spanish language. I should be more present in Spain, but sometimes it's difficult and I don't know how much longer I can keep fighting for a place.

Arbalejo affirmed how her writing style has changed over the years. She also went on to talk about a project she was involved in during the pandemic, which she holds dearly to her heart.

Something I learned from listening to Sonny Rollins live was that I had to change my way of writing if I wanted to share what was happening on that stage. You can't be clinical when writing about jazz, you need to go beyond the musical features and share what happened there. It was music and a lot more. Art happening is an extremely deep and human experience. How can you read about something that has been expressed through an instrument, not a pen? How do you put it into words? For me, it's always sacred work; with live music, it's really a challenge.

We had a beautiful project when the pandemic started with the Jazz Journalists Association. It was called 'Jazz on Lockdown'; within the project we began to share the music of various musicians that wasn't released (as well as virtually putting on the concerts that couldn't happen) because of the pandemic. Those musicians had extra support from the project and the rest of the world.

My final question was centred around Arbalejo's influences and how they've affected her career.

Everything had an influence on my writing. I've listened to a lot of jazz. I have to listen to around 1000 albums every year for my work, where I vote in polls. It's all related to the emotion that my influences make me feel, things that have touched me; it's come from a lot of classical literature and poetry too.



It was such an incredible experience to meet and chat with Arbalejo, and both being Spanish speakers allowed us to form a lovely connection.

By winning this award, Arbalejo has not only proved herself to be a significant woman in jazz, but also a pioneering arts journalist. I expect this to be one of the first of many incredible awards to come!

If you want to explore more of Mirian Arbalejo's work, follow these links: [**Mirian Arbalejo**](#)

Photographs courtesy of Mirian Arbalejo and Isabel Marquez



Isabel Marquez, having just completed her music degree, is now embarking on a career as jazz journalist. We are very proud to publish her first article in this magazine.

Do follow and support her work here:

[**Isabel Marquez**](#)



LARA MEHMET





LARA MEHMET

THE JAZZ REMEDY

I often talk about the power of music and how through history it has been used to communicate the truths we all need to hear. We have all, I'm sure, been involved in conversations, discussing how music heals and makes us feel better, even if it is just a moment and how it should be prescribed as medicine. Scrolling through Instagram, racing through the standard videos of cats, performances, dancing, I immediately stopped on a young singer called Lara Mehmet. My first thoughts were, how can that voice come out from someone so young? It wasn't just that this thirteen-year-old had technical abilities and a beautiful mature quality and tone to her voice, it was the depth of emotion that struck me. I could feel her joy, but I also sensed some pain, a mandatory requirement for jazz.

Have a look at Lara singing Ella and Duke's

'In A Mellow Tone'

Like me, I am sure you now will be inspired to scroll through her feed, watch more videos and want to hear more about this young woman. I contacted her mother, the incredible Sema, and I am grateful to be in touch with Lara and I am now Lara's biggest fan. Her story, so far, is truly inspirational.

Her Instagram performances, mostly in her home, with her dog Bubbles, show how not only at ease Lara is performing, but how natural is it to her, she almost seems like a true pro already.

Well I've always done like, mini gigs would you say? Just for me to enjoy I guess, so not really gig gigs, but just for fun with my musician friends. There's a Golf Club that happens every month and I go there and it's like a fun giggie thing and I like to do that every month. I've just started it so last month, but I think it's quite fun to start off with, you know getting used to the crowd.

Here is Lara **'getting used to the crowd'**

I asked Lara if she ever got nervous before her performances

Not really because my main focus is what I'm going to do and what I'm singing at the moment, so I don't think about anything else. Not that I get embarrassed but sometimes, well I'm short and I feel quite, you know, sad that I can't do stuff as much as other people. But the music, it just brings that to my main focus, which is quite, you know, good because that's kind of what distracts me from everything else that's happening. I love just being in front of the stage and expressing my singing.

Jazz has been part of Lara's life for many years, despite her still only being thirteen. I asked her to tell me how jazz came into her life

I was in hospital when I was quite little, I was like 1/2 years old, I don't have much memory of it but I was very sick and there were people in the hospital, music therapy people so it always used to distract me from, you know, the hospital thingies...

... and that's what my mum said, she said it really made me happy. So, my mum was quite happy about this and she was like, you know we should bring her up with music, we should try different types of music and see what types of music she likes. I joined a choir when I was 6/7, a local choir and after that I started some private lessons and that really helped me because I could see which type of music that I wanted to do.

One day, I went to my aunt's house and she had some records of some old jazz people and I really liked that. I started listening to that and I was always happy and started singing it.

Like many of us, her early influences, were the legends we all know and love.

I think my first jazz song was Que Sera Sera, Doris Day? But at home, my sister used to listen to Amy Winehouse, and I was like ooh her voice is jazzy and I was like, oh let's listen to her and see who she was inspired by. So, I started listening to more jazz and it just clung on to me and I just wanted to listen to more and more! Right now, my favourite people who were jazz musicians I would say are Ella Fitzgerald, Chet Baker, Nancy Wilson, Sarah Vaughan, George Benson all of that...

Lara mentioning Chet Baker interested me and I remember a video of her working on a transcription for a Lester Young solo. You can watch it

[**here**](#)

Lara truly explores jazz and is trying to fully embed herself in all instruments.

I would say I'm learning theory and I play loads of instruments as well and that's also what got me into jazz, I picked up jazz instruments on the way! The first instrument that I had was the violin, but I didn't really, you know, practise but my sister had a piano in the next room, and I started picking her up from her lessons and I just wanted to play piano after that. I also play the trumpet and ukulele so five instruments. I've always wanted to try more and more instruments but my main one is vocals and piano.

Lara talks about these inspirational jazz legends like they are her companions, her soulmates. I asked her if she could tell me what it is about Ella Fitzgerald that she loves so much.

I don't know, but her way of scatting and her life, I guess her experiences of jazz. I watched some documentaries of her because I was so inspired

by her. Her voice and her scatting, because she practically invented scatting so I guess I'm kind of inspired by her scatting and I use her scat skills for my scat skills.

Lara has an incredible understanding of what is at the heart of jazz. We talked about the challenges jazz artists such as Ella faced and how someone of Lara's age doesn't generally understand the depth of these barriers, let alone how the music is embedded.

I guess well, because I'm disabled I kind of relate to people who have like a hard life with Jazz. With me, people stare at me a lot and it kind of makes me overwhelmed. I try so hard you know, doing my things and that one person that stares at me, breaks me down. So that's one of the challenges that I face, and I feel like it's quite hard to do that. But whenever I, you know, just listen to music or something, it kind of distracts me from something that I'm worried about. It's kind of like, I guess, is the remedy I would say. I can flashback to when I was one, it was a remedy to me then and it's a remedy to me now. That's why I stuck with jazz and that's what made me happy.

There are many, many, many young people who at the age of thirteen, have ideas of fame and fortune, the X factor generation, which quite frankly terrifies me, but what stands out about Lara, and what in fact draws me to her, is, she just loves Jazz. She doesn't talk about fame or fortune she simply loves singing and you can feel that joy. But she is a very intelligent and focussed young woman and when I asked her plans for the future, she quite simply said:

Well right now, I'm taking it easy. I don't really know how to explain it because I'm quite happy at the moment. I have lessons with other people, and I mean I sing everywhere.

And finally, I asked Lara what she would say to anyone who was facing barriers

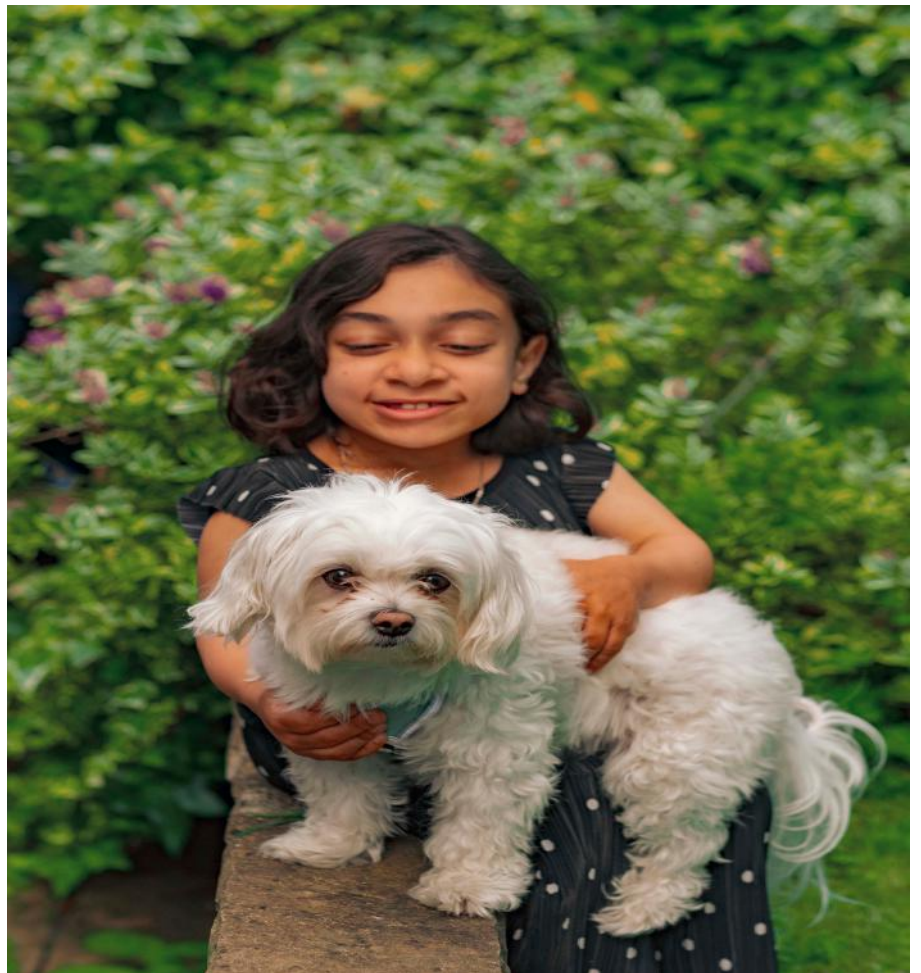
I guess, keep going! Even with all of the barriers that you have, because that's what helped me overcome everything. So, I would say, keep going with what you're happy with and don't think what other people think about you, because I mean, it's your life and you're doing what you want in your life because it's you.



We at Women in Jazz Media will be following Lara's progress and hope you will join us. Do follow Lara on Instagram, link [here](#)

We would also like to thank Lara's Mother, Sema, for trusting us and allowing us to speak to Lara and share her story.

Interview by Fiona Ross
Photography by Kenan Korkmaz







LET'S TALK ABOUT ALICE COLTRANE

BY
AYDENNE
SIMONE





Photo by Chuck Stewart

Coltrane is a name so well known by jazz lovers the world over. John Coltrane, Alice's husband was the American bebop and hard bop trail blazing jazz saxophonist, leading many famous jazz recordings and albums such as 'A Love Supreme' (1965). He also worked on albums with other incredible musicians such as Miles Davis and Monk. Some would say he is still the most influential saxophonist in jazz music history, although, many would argue there are others that could comfortably wear that badge; Parker, Rollins, Getz, or Webster for example.

Alice came from a musical family. Her sister was Motown songwriter Marilyn McLeod who wrote 'Love hangover' alongside Pam Sawyer, made famous by Diana Ross.

It is not so odd that people know of Alice Coltrane, due to her marriage to John Coltrane. This is of course indicative of how women can be perceived - let's make the 'man' connection!

Alice was a jazz harpist, and one of only a few in the history of jazz. One could say that she was an absolute trail blazer in that respect. Whether we choose to accept it or not, the harp is not an instrument one immediately associates with jazz. Alice Coltrane is another woman in jazz who rarely (never in my experience) comes up in those 'gig break' conversations when jazz musicians enthuse about their favourite artists, latest songs and swap knowledge.

I sat down for a chat with Alina Bzhezhska Lazorkina for Women in Jazz Media. A jazz harpist with a very close connection with Alice Coltrane. We wanted to know more....

Why do you have such a connection with Alice Coltrane?

She is still underrated. She is one of the few female jazz musicians that left a strong foot print, but, she was always in the shadow of John. Alice understood the spiritual connection that John wanted to convey with his music.

When you were studying music did the name Alice Coltrane ever come up?

No. We didn't hear about Alice Coltrane, even whilst studying Music at University. Artists like Alice are not considered mainstream for general music education, their names are simply not mentioned.

So how does a jazz harpist find their way forward in the industry?

Jazz harpists playing now have to discover everything from YouTube or online somewhere, and not from an academy or music school. People like Alice Coltrane, are people who simply do not fit into their box or boxes.

I lost 20 years of my career as a jazz harpist, doing stuff I loved, but didn't fulfill me. Playing classical music, it did full fill me, but only partly. When I finished studying in Warsaw, I did not know how to express myself with music. I never imagined I could play from the heart with such freedom. Alice Coltrane was so brave and daring to just go for it in the way she did. Personally, I was scared that I would not be able to do something like that.

I missed so many years of knowing different ways of playing. Alice and John's connection guided me. I didn't know what to do with it, and how to start. I had to educate myself. I had to start my own jazz education, learning and reading about jazz, mostly by listening to Coltrane's music which guided me to find my own language within jazz. I had to learn the rules and then break them all over again. The way we were taught music was to play with many safety nets.

What was so special about Alice Coltrane in your view?

Alice taught spiritual connections through music. She managed to teach musicians how to connect themselves to the music, and that is a manifestation of the spiritual expression and connection of what and who she was, and, of course John's creative thought process too.



Can that spiritual connection with your soul in music be taught do you think?

It can be taught if you have someone as spiritually strong as Alice was. Alice always said

“Music comes from the heart”.

In traditional education, it was considered weird to know how to connect to your soul.

What specific moments in Alice's life are significant for you?

John bought Alice her first harp, from harp makers Lyon & Healy. It took a whole year to make it, and when it was finally delivered, sadly John had already died, so he never actually saw her get this wonderful gift. For Alice to start playing again with this harp, it was like a gift from John himself.

Alice was self-taught on the harp, although she was already an accomplished musician. The first album where there was a spiritual cry was not melodic, it was an expression of emotions. Her playing subsequently changed to reach a wider audience.



Photo by Monika S Jakubowska

Have you found it difficult to secure work playing jazz harp

A few years ago there was an opportunity and a welcome from the sector, which encouraged me to come and play. Playing Coltrane's music, which has to be heard, created a fortunate opportunity. People understood it, and wanted to hear it live. I will never totally relax and take anything for granted.

With this instrument, playing jazz has given me the opportunities. That said, it is not like a saxophonist where people would want to hear another saxophonist in the same club. I wanted to prove that the harp could be widely accepted as a jazz instrument as other instruments are.

We would like to thank Alina for sharing her thoughts with us and for all the inspirational work she does to ensure we never forget Alice Coltrane.

Below is 'Blue Nile' by Alice Coltrane performed by the Alina Bzhezhinska Quartet, live in London, July 2018. Enjoy.

Photo by Jess Rose



Photo by Tatiana Gorilovsky





THE VOICE OF LOVE AND PEACE: DORIE PRIDE

BY PAULETTE
JACKSON

I have had the pleasure of being connected with this brilliant songbird for a few years now and honored to call her friend and “sister”. Her music and voice resonate beauty, grace, and peace within it.

There really aren't enough words to describe this wonderful, spiritual, and gifted lady but I will try my best here to do so. I am speaking of none other than, Ms. Dorie Pride.

Dorie's music style is diverse and an eclectic blend of pop, soul, folk, rock, Latin, jazz, and funk (as described in her bio). But, for me it goes much deeper than that. Dorie's music has so much powerful messaging that she delivers in a rich, soft tone. Her voice is soothing and perfect for the type of music she shares with the world.

Her music and message are something the world needs, especially now. When you sit and really listen to the words, accompanied by rich melodies, you can hear Dorie's spirit in each song she sings.

Dorie Pride is not just a singer, but songwriter, author, and positive motivator. She chooses to share all these gifts with the world in her own unique way and she never fails to bring forth the sunshine within her to the light of this world. Dorie is truly a gift from above and we are fortunate that she has chosen to share her wonderful music and words with us. It makes the world a little less cold and a lot warmer.

Dorie's newest release is “Lift You Up” produced by her husband, Kamau Seitu (who is also her photographer). This single speaks to who Dorie is and I urge you all to please not only to get this new single but, to check out all her music, it will inspire you for sure!

Dorie Pride is the epitome of what a woman is, strength, light, and love. She is beyond gifted in all she touches, and I am proud to call her friend.

To find out more about Dorie's new music, books, and videos, please visit her website [**here**](#)



DORIE
PRIDE.

Lift You Up

Produced & Arranged by KAMAU SETU





ON THE Women in Jazz Media PLAYLIST

BRAD STONE

We are thrilled to welcome the award-winning Brad Stone as our guest curator for our Women in Jazz Media Playlist for this edition.

Brad has been a radio programmer and music director for the past 40+ years and is the host of the brilliant 'The Creative Source' on www.soulandjazz.com which always features a beautifully diverse mix of progressive jazz and fusion, new jazz releases, current artists and original compositions. He is also the 2-time winner of the Bobby Jackson Award for Internet/Non-terrestrial jazz programming, 7-time winner of Jazz Programmer of the Year with Gavin and JazzWeek and winner of the Duke DuBois Humanitarian Award at JazzWeek for lifetime contributions to the jazz music and jazz radio community.

To listen to Brad's 'The Creative Source' show on Soul and Jazz, click [**here**](#)





Photo courtesy of Jazz Connect

JEAN FINEBERG





Photo by Sandy Morris



Saxophonist Jean Fineberg leads her group Jazzphoria in the San Francisco Bay Area. The band has played at the prestigious Monterey Jazz Festival and San Jose Summer Jazz Fest, as well as many other festivals and venues. Jazzphoria is a talented group of women instrumentalists (with the exception of drummer Lance Dresser, a boy!).

Their latest release, eponymously titled Jean Fineberg and Jazzphoria, is currently getting airplay across U.S. jazz radio stations. We were happy to see that the album was co-produced by the noted jazz trumpeter Ellen Seeling, who also appears on this record. The remarkable thing about this band is their seamless shifting from R&B, the blues, swing and big band, Latin, New Orleans second line, bop, ballads, etc. There is even a Middle Eastern influenced track on the new album.

[Click here to buy](#)

[Click here to find out more about Jean Fineberg](#)



Photo by Sandy Morris

LYNNE ARRIALE

Photo by Andrea Canter





As a pianist (well, a former one, anyway!), I have a particular fondness for jazz piano, and have been following jazz pianists for most of my life. When one studies jazz piano that way, one develops an ear for what I call “the touch of a master”. It is immediately recognizable when the pianist puts fingers to the keyboard. Lynne Arriale has that touch.

I also have a particular penchant for the piano trio format. Lynne’s latest album, “The Light is Always On”, on Challenge Records, is one of the great piano trio releases of 2022. Her trio includes Jasper Somsen, a bassist with a wonderful tone; and the wonderful E.J. Strickland on the drums. Of particular note with this album – all compositions are Lynne’s. She’s a master composer as well.

If you’re a fan of the piano trio, this one is a must.

[Click here to buy](#)

[Click here to find out more about Lynne Arriale](#)



Photo by Juan Carlos Villorroel



MELISSA ALDANA

Photo by Eduardo Pavez Goye





Melissa is already a very recognizable name in jazz circles at her young age. Originally from Santiago, Chile, she learned saxophone from her saxophonist father at an early age. Although she sights Sonny Rollins as a big influence, one can hear the early influences and carry over from her alto saxophone playing days. She has certainly developed her own sound on the tenor.

Her debut album on Blue Note, “12 Stars”, is a remarkable step forward for her. Her band is a cast of much in demand artists on the N.Y. scene: Kush Abadey on drums, Pablo Menares on bass, the incredible Sullivan Fortner on piano (nice to hear him on Fender Rhodes on this record as well), and the sublime Lage Lund on guitar. All original compositions by Melissa and the band. What I really admire is her ability to write for the entire band – she doesn’t just use them to support her own instrumental performance.

Truly a “record of the year”.

[Click here to buy](#)

[Click here to find out more about Melissa Aldana](#)



Photo by Eduardo Pavez Goye

ROXY COSS



Photo by Desmond White





Ms. Coss has already released her sixth album in her young career, with “Disparate Parts”, on Outside In Music, a label noted for supporting artists doing adventurous music. It has been interesting to follow her career, from her self-released debut album, 2 relatively straight ahead (but excellent!) releases on Posi-tone Records, and then going in a more progressive direction with her second album now on Outside In Music.

Her stellar band includes Jimmy Macbride on the drums, Rick Rosato on bass, Miki Yamanaka on piano and Rhodes, and Alex Wintz, who provides some remarkable guitar work on this album. Roxy performs mostly on tenor, but also does some impressive soprano playing. What most impresses me is that Roxy and the band perform complex and progressive material, yet maintain a strong melodic sensibility. All original compositions on this album, which I personally love to see.

A stellar release. We hope that you’ll pick up a copy!

[Click here to buy](#)

[Click here to find out more about Roxy](#)

Photo by Desmond White



SOMI



Photo by Daniel Wexler





I first experienced Somi seeing her live in downtown N.Y., at a club as part of the Winterfest that year. I was invited to attend a showcase for the newly re-launched Okeh Records, headed up by Chuck Mitchell. Somi was on the bill, and I was really impressed with her singing, material, stage presence, etc. I assumed that she was an African native, but interestingly later found out that she was born close to where I was born, in Illinois! Her parents were from Rwanda and Uganda, and when she was 3, the family moved to Zambia. Later in life, she lived for a spell in Nigeria.

She has thoroughly embraced her African heritage, and this comes through most effectively on her new release on the Salon Africana label, “Zenzile: The Reimagination of Miriam Makeba”. Makeba was a much revered songwriter and vocalist from South Africa – this album serves a remarkable contemporary and cross-cultural exposition of music written by, and associated with Makeba. Special guests include Nduduzo Makhathini, Ladysmith Black Mambazo, Gregory Porter and Angelique Kidjo.

I dare you to try to sit still while listening to this album!

[**Click here to buy**](#)

[**Click here to find out more about Somi**](#)



IDIT SHNER

Photo by Dmitri von Klein





Alto saxophonist Idit Shner has successfully bridged the gap between classical music and jazz – she has performed in both camps. In the classical world, she was commissioned to write pieces and perform in both the U.S. and in Israel. She holds a doctorate from the University of North Texas, and is the Philip H. Knight Professor of Jazz Studies and Saxophone at the University of Oregon. She now has 7 releases on the Origin Records label out of Seattle: 3 on the Origin Classical imprint, and 4 jazz albums on the OA2 imprint!

Her latest album, with the group Mhondoro, is entitled “Heat Wave”. This is a remarkable collaboration with Zimbabwean percussionist John Mambira, who happens to be her neighbor in Oregon. The cross-pollination of Zimbabwean rhythms and jazz improvisation is so infectious!

Two tracks stand out in particular: “Mhondoro” (same name as the group) and “Usavabvumire” (based upon a traditional Zimbabwean melody) – worth the price of the album alone, and you get the rest of this fine album as a bonus!

[**Click here to buy**](#)

[**Click here to find out more about Idit**](#)

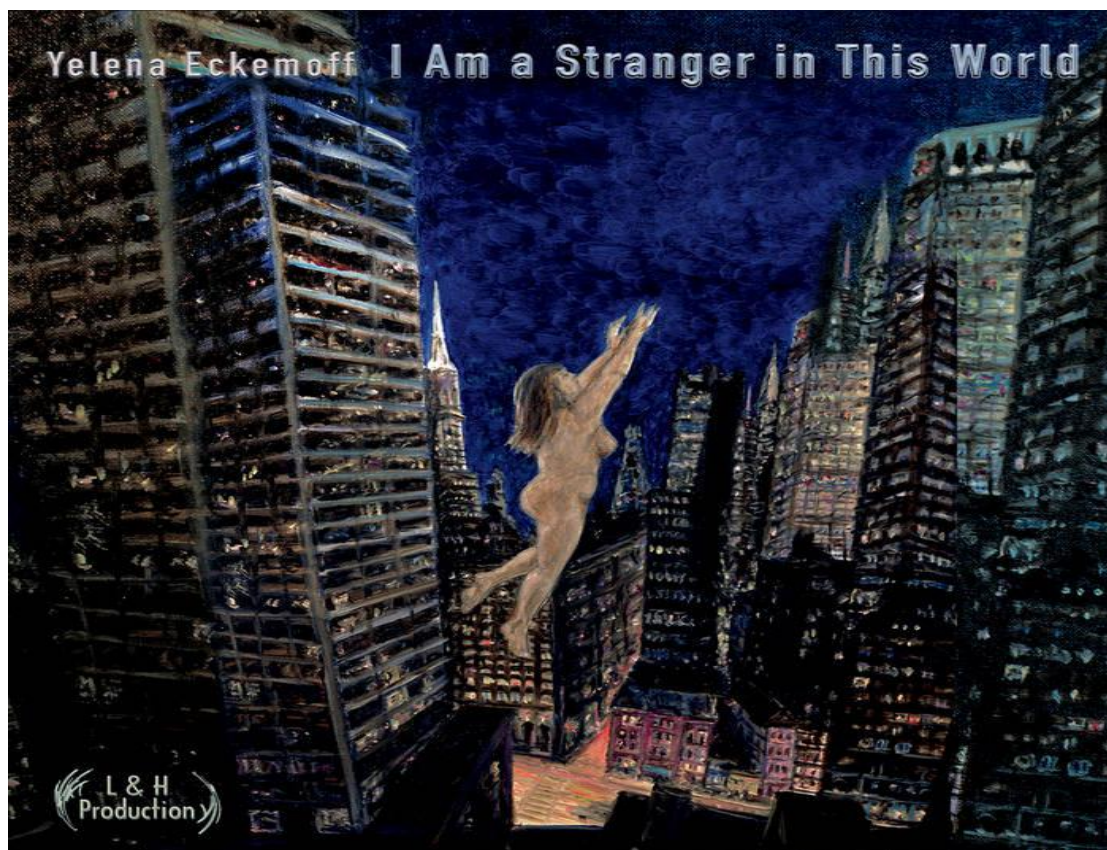


Photo by Dmitri von Klein

YELENA ECKEMOFF

Photo courtesy of Yelena Eckemoff





Yelena Eckemoff comes to us from Moscow, Russia, where she was born, raised, and educated in music. She now lives in North Carolina in the United States. She has now lived in the U.S. for over 30 years.

Ms. Eckemoff is a very unique and gifted pianist and composer. Add to that prolific, as she has released a multitude of albums, using a variety of different instrument formats and musicians. Her latest release, "I Am a Stranger Here Myself", includes all original music by Yelena (inspired by biblical psalms), and she is accompanied by a literal who's who of jazz greats: Nasheet Waits, Joey Baron, Ben Monder, Ralph Alessi, Adam Rogers, Christian Howes and Drew Gress. In her music, one can detect the richly harmonic and brooding music of the great Russian classical romantic composers as an influence. The album is released on her own L&H Productions label.

Yelena may be from Russia, but we claim her as one of our own here in the United States!

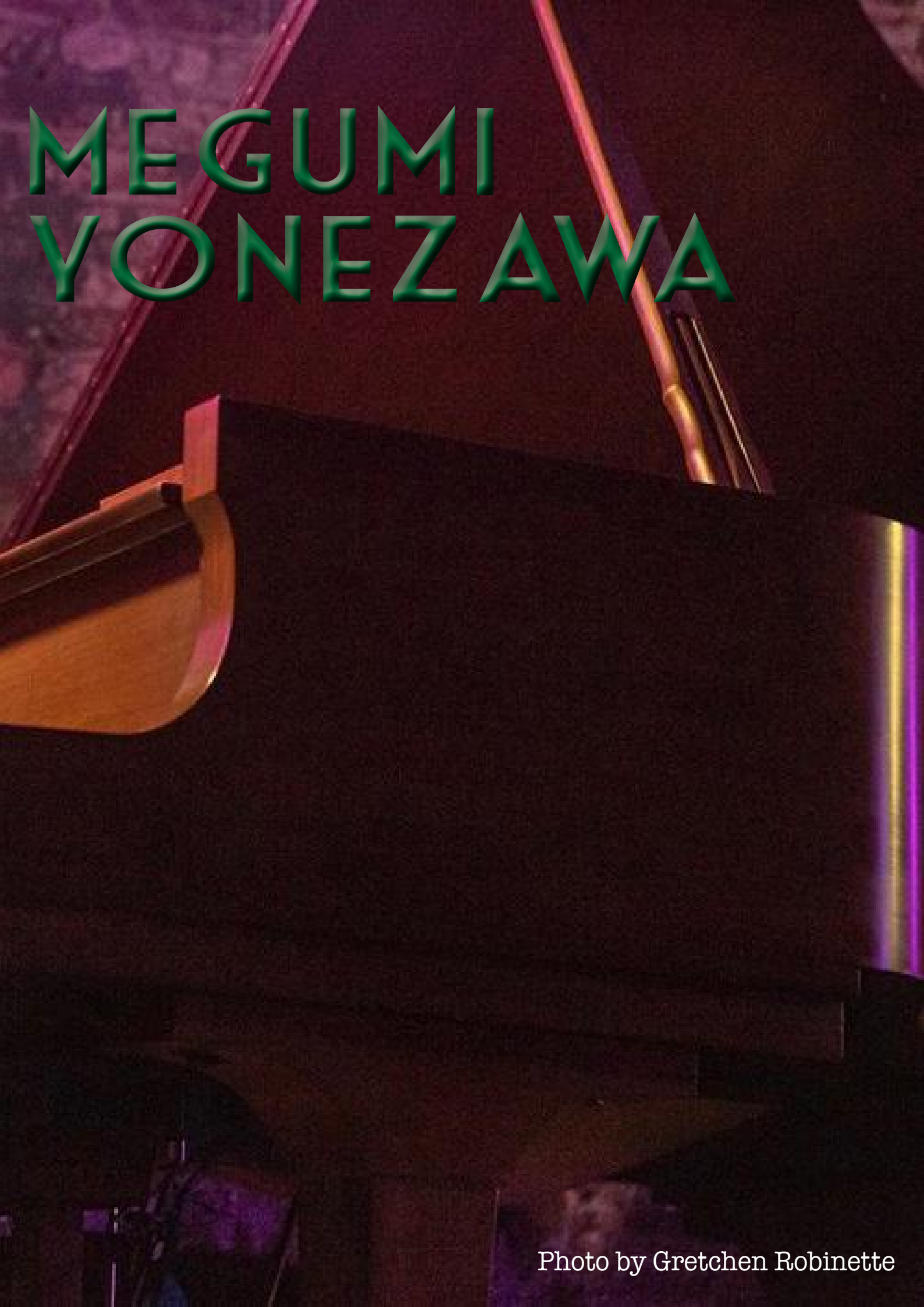
[Click here to buy](#)

[Click here to find out more about Yelena](#)



Photo by Jacek Brun





MEGUMI YONEZAWA

Photo by Gretchen Robinette



One can always count on François Zalacain and his team to bring us talented artists that might otherwise go unnoticed. Megumi Yonezawa is a special talent.

Originally from Hokkaido, Japan, she came to the United States to study piano at Berklee. Now residing in New York, her new release “Resonance” on Sunnyside is a nice follow-up to her 2016 release “A Result of the Colors”, which came out of Fresh Sound New Talent. She has been the regular pianist in Greg Osby’s group, and thus has toured around the world.

“Resonance” is a nice mix of standards and originals. Her deft, yet delicate touch are readily and equally apparent on both. She is sensitively accompanied by Mike McGuirk on bass and Mark Ferber on drums.

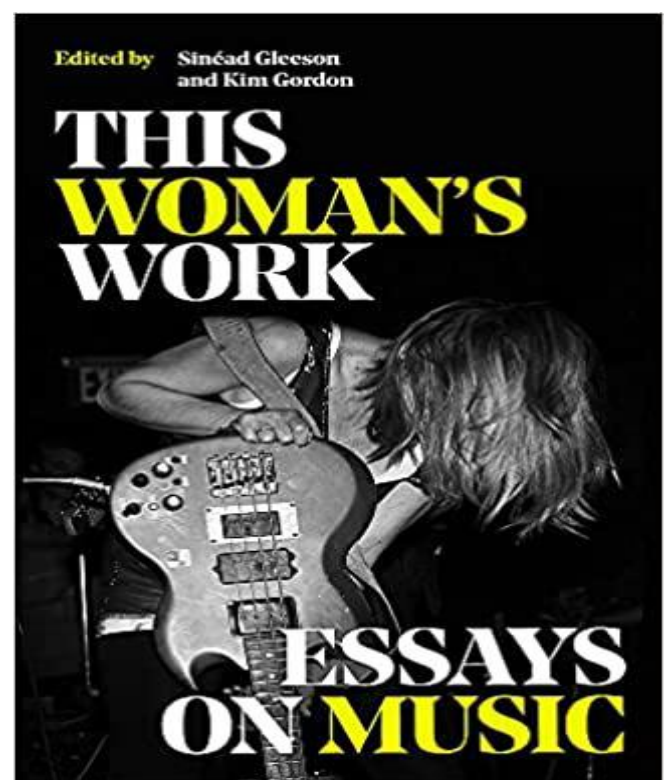
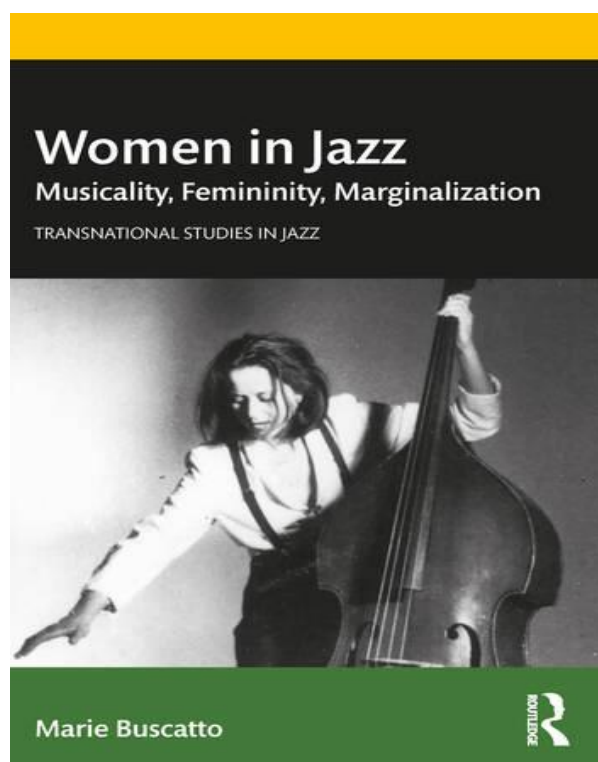
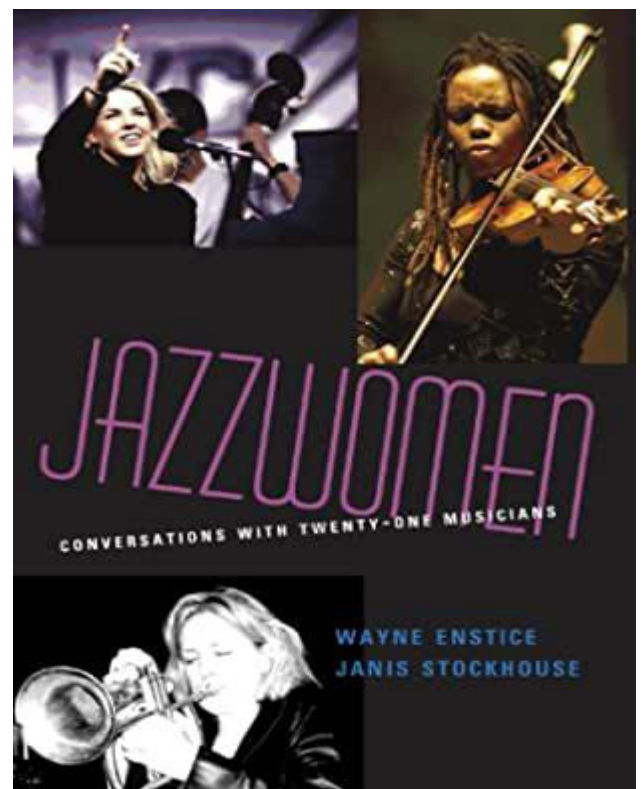
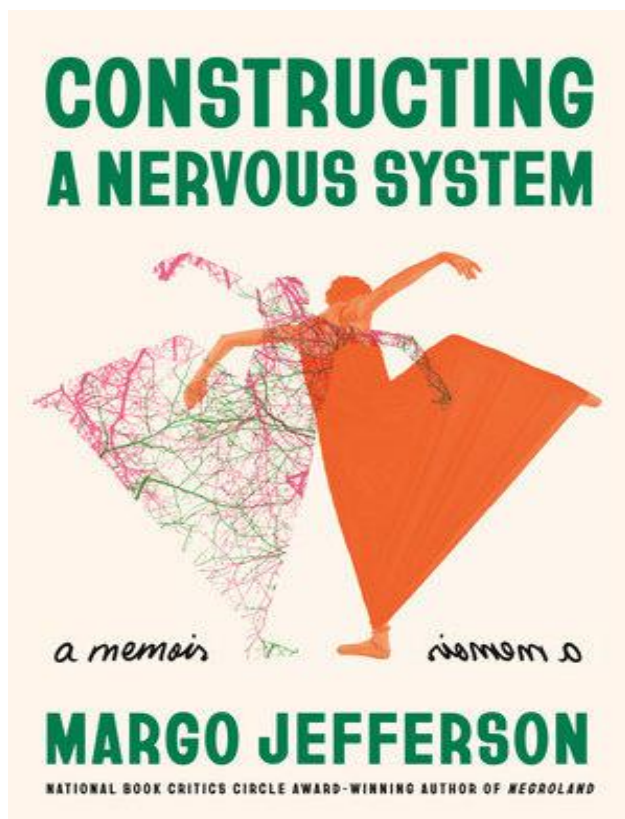
“Talent deserving wider recognition” is an oft-used, perhaps overly used phrase, but it couldn’t apply more appropriately than to Ms. Yonezawa.

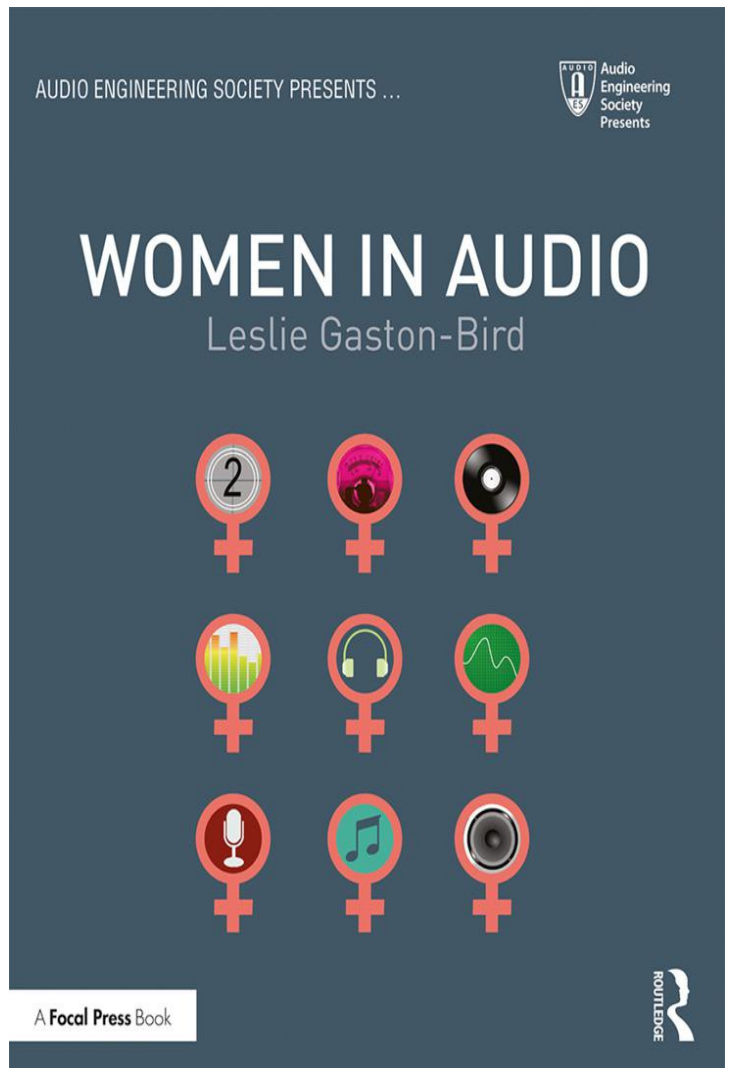
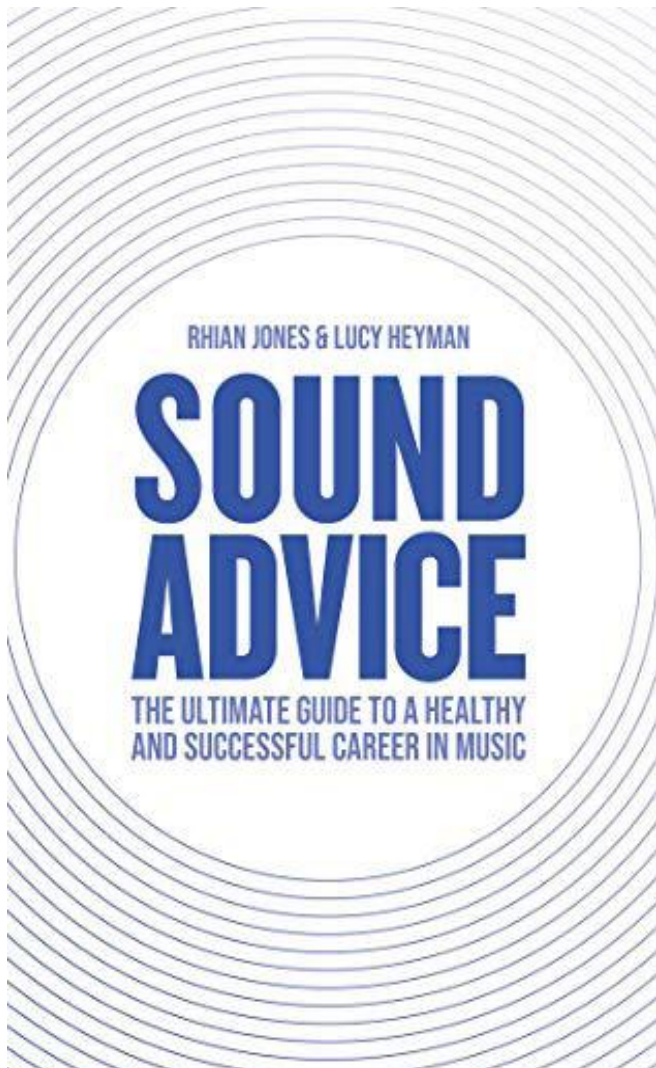
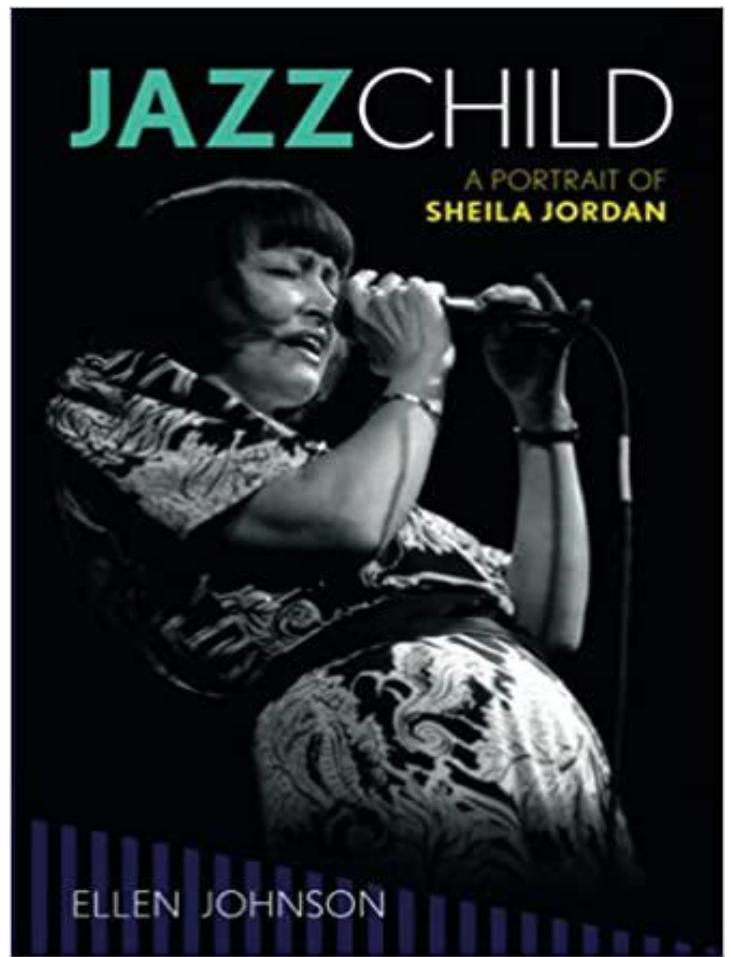
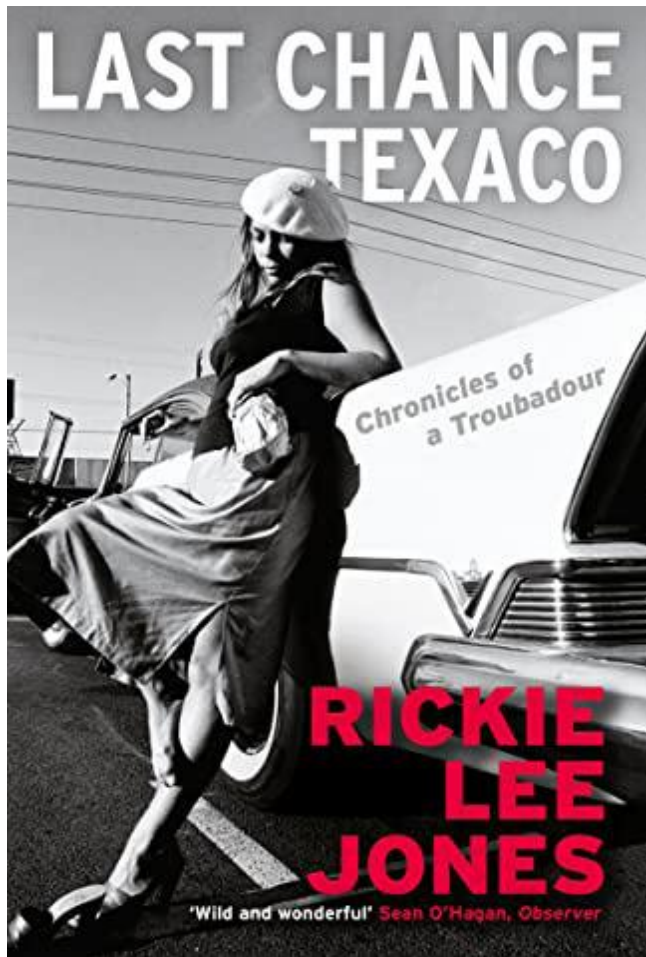
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[Click here to find out more about Yelena](#)



ON THE BOOKCASE







Rosie Frater-Taylor by Patricia Pascal





Rosie Frater-Taylor by Patricia Pascal



TINA MAY



Photo by Tatiana Gorilovsky



LET'S TALK ABOUT TINA MAY BY AYDENNE SIMONE

Tina May from Gloucester, UK, was one of our (UK's) most well loved, international popular jazz singers. If you are involved in the UK jazz scene, you know her name, and to many her name alone brought with it a smile. Tina carried with her love, warmth and a passion for the music she loved.

Sadly, Tina died in March 2022 of a brain tumour at just 60 years old. Her death has shocked so many in the jazz scene, right to the core. Newspapers, jazz publications and magazines wrote about her following her death, and talked about her contribution to the jazz music and the global jazz music scene, and so they should of course. She brought an incredible freshness to jazz that puts the genre where it belongs.

Some readers will know that Tina May married British jazz drummer Clark Tracey in 1989, and they had two children; Ben and Gemma.

The last two and a half years Tina's partner was the incredible jazz saxophonist and jazz historian Simon Spillett. A very moving Facebook post from Simon said:

"Life will not be the same without you, my darling Tina. And your departure will leave a hole in the heart of so many people. But to me, you really were the angel glow that lit every dawn. I will miss you more than mere words can express but as life moves forward you will be there at every turn, your smile, your beautiful voice and your exemplary humanity as present as they always have been."



Photo by Tatiana Gorilovsky

Women in Jazz Media are very proud to have received some wonderful messages about Tina, from her lovely friends in the business, including this lovely quote from the super jazz vocalist Esther Bennett.

“Apart from her incredible sense of jazz rhythm, timing, melody and improvisation, and her deeply human interpretation of the written word; what I also mostly learned from Tina was an unflappable sense of how to do ‘jazz business’.”





**“Tina May,
she had soul,
she had heart,
she had passion
and
she shared it”**

Kate O'Loughlin

-Speakeasy Jazz Club, Portishead.

Women in Jazz Media feel very, very privileged to talk to one of Tina May's oldest and closest friends Kate O'Loughlin.

Kate is a well known concert and event producer in the South West of England, and the 'head honcho' of Speakeasy Jazz Club, Portishead. Kate books many well-known jazz giants for the Speakeasy Jazz Club including of course Tina May, Tina's partner Simon Spillett, Craig Milverton, Esther Bennett, Hannah Horton and so many, many more.

How did you and Tina meet?

Tina and I were very close. We have been close friends for many, many years. I met Tina at the age of just 22, and Tina was only 19. Our friendship started when I auditioned for the Shakespeare play 'Comedy of Errors' at the Sherman Theatre in Cardiff. We clicked from day one.

So how did your friendship with Tina develop into a lifelong friendship?

Well, as I said, I had auditioned for 'Comedy of Errors', and it was going well, but the director decided to turn it into a musical, and asked me take on a singing role.

At the time, Tina was already an established jazz singer, and she could have taken the part herself, but I told them no immediately, saying I was not a singer. she was such a generous soul, she chose to encourage me instead, telling me 'you can do it'”

You must look back and laugh at the good times you both had?

“Oh goodness yes! When I look back, there are so many funny stories. For example, Tina had a yellow Spitfire, and it leaked! So sometimes we had to sit in the car with umbrellas. Imagine that!”





So, Tina's death must have been a massive blow for you, and hit you pretty hard after being such close friends for so many years since the early 80's?

I was absolutely reeling. I couldn't sleep and found myself in such a state. I lost my voice, and found it difficult to talk about, even to talk to the Speakeasy Jazz Club audience, who of course would have known her. It was just too painful.

I remember Tina's last gig in August 2021 with her partner Simon Spillett at Speakeasy Jazz Club, Portishead. She never sang again.

What are your lasting memories of Tina?

To me she was just 'Teenie'; it was all about love with Tina. She had love for everyone and was never judgemental of anyone. She couldn't stand injustice, which I guess was why she was such a political animal at times. All through the Covid-19 lockdown she was protesting, standing up for the NHS.

A selection of photos that have been kindly shared with us:





Photo by Emmanuelle Margarita



Photo by Emmanuelle Margarita





Photo by Emmanuelle Margarita



BARBARA THOMPSON



Photo by Martin Goddard