

Artist Narrative

Janice Jarrett

Early influences: My family told me that at all of 3 years old, I stood on a stump and told them to listen to me sing. I was like the little girls whose mothers call my studio, telling me their daughters won't stop singing, and won't stop asking for lessons.

I sang in church and school choirs. My first solo was as a high school freshman. But even in grade school, to muffle the sound of the late night music programs on the radio underneath my bed, I drew my blankets over my head and leaned over the edge. I listened to Ella, Sarah, Lady Day and the crooners like Sinatra and Bennett. I was crazy about Johny Mathis. I loved and memorized songs, including many from my sisters' cast recordings of musicals. The legendary icons and musicals schooled me well, and I learned 100s of songs that make up the legacy of Jazz and the Great American Songbook.

Early Bandleader/Producer: In high school I taught myself to read music on an old piano out on the carport. By college I was singing blues, soul, rock, classical and pop. But in my own bands, it was jazz. And when I spent off campus work-studies in New York City, I found a job through Urban Core at the Brooklyn Muse Jazz Workshops as assistant to the director, the late remarkable composer, multi-instrumentalist, and arranger Bill Barron.



The influence of the city and the extraordinary musicians from that time remain with me. As a struggling scholarship student I worked multiple jobs. One night my head usher at Carnegie Hall let me run across to street on my break to stand in the back of a club to catch 20 unforgettable minutes, live, of another legend, Betty Carter.

In my grad school world music program I studied Caribbean music, the vocal music of north and south India, and heard concert music of Japan, Latin America, Indonesia and more. I took drumming and dance of Ghana for all the years I pursued my Masters and Doctorate. Somehow I balanced multiple part time jobs there with my studies, toured with a new music composer, took private lessons in composition with jazz great Jimmy Guiffre, did field research in Greece and produced a concert series on campus, Music for Mediation, focused on free jazz.

Writing Lyrics: During the years in and out of NYC I heard such vibrant works by great musicians that I wanted to perform them with my instrument, so I began to write lyrics. One of my very first was for Kenny Barron, whose music continues to inspire me. Through the years, I added more original collaborations as I travelled. As a professor in Michigan, my students played and sang them too. That's how I began collaborating with the great Eddie Russ. Passing through Tucson on my way to California, I added more collaborations, and in Los Angeles, I happily found more beautiful inspirations, including compositions by Freddie Hubbard and the remarkable George Cables.

My lyrics sometimes travelled on their own - from New York to Paris, Michigan to Colorado, even to Australia. One of my earliest lyrics to Kenny Barron's "Sunshower" had its first release on a Jay Clayton recording with Unity. Years later, listening to live jazz in a Tucson restaurant, John Ronstadt sang it. Wendy Fopeano in Denver and Jane Irving in Australia found me before adding it to their CDs.

(See my Discography on janice.jarrett.com for a complete list, including the 7 originals on my CD "Blue Nights and Sunshower.")

Arranger, Bandleader: The majority of the repertoire for Borrowed Time, the five-voice jazz group I led in LA in the '80s, were my arrangements and lyrics, and included works by Kenny Barron, George Cables, Freddie Hubbard, Eddie Russ, Judd Miller, and Moacir Santos. Whenever I perform as JJJazz, from duos to large ensembles, I mix in my collaborations with Latin and Brazilian music and gems from the rich jazz legacy.

I've been honored by some of these renown composers bringing songs to me for lyrics, including George Cables's "Blue Nights," Kenny Barron's "Illusion" and "Beyond This Place," Freddie Hubbard's "Skydive," and Moacir Santos's "Kathy" and "Jequie."

In my new Website, janice.jarrett.com, I am happy to finally make these wonderful works available as PDF lead sheets and arrangements in the site's Shop.

For more than 15 years I have run a music studio located in Tucson, Arizona, featuring voice lessons as well as sessions on songwriting, theory and more, both in private lessons and a variety of workshops. I've been a journalist and speaker on music and the arts for some time now, and I perform for various venue when I can.

*See janicejarrett.com for more: For information and booking email info@janicejarrett.com
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