

Australian Jazz Museum

Australian Women in Jazz

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WOMEN IN JAZZ

Extracted from South Australian Jazz Archive Inc.

“BACK BEAT” Vol. 5, Issue 2, July 2008

Once upon a time, girls were not encouraged to play wind instruments, especially the brass. “It skids on your lip-stick” as English comedian Anna Russell infamously said of the French horn and one assumes that the cornet attracted the same criticism.

This, perhaps, helps to explain the extreme “blokey” image of the music not so very long ago. I can think of only one female trumpet player from those times with somewhat of an international reputation – Valaida Snow. So it is surprising to find that, in this small town, the early jazz – perhaps it is better to say “dance” – groups were led by women.

Pianist Gertie Campbell (died June 21, 1943) was, in 1919, the first local leader to apply the name “jazz” to her group but, hot on her heels, were Dorothy Dailey, Melbourne émigré Hilda Hansen, Louie Webb, Eileen Hakendorf, Jean Hakendorf, Olga Durnell, Melva Bartle and a number of others. All were pianists as were their male rivals – Val Royal at the Palais de Danse, Clarrie Young at Thebarton and Jack Fewster everywhere.

Whilst AJM’s tribute to women in jazz is generally biased to the singers, let us also remember the wonderful and very talented female instrumentalists who performed in the early years, and those who continue to contribute to the jazz scene today and into the future.

Shirley Appelt

guitarist

Shirley Appelt was one of the few female jazz instrumentalists, pianists apart, that we could find from the 1940s. She played guitar and led her own Hawaiian group. More to the point, however, she played with the revivalists.

In 1943 she was with Mal Badenoch piano, Allen Woods trumpet, George Browne bass and Bob Badenoch drums. The “Cora Whitwell Benefit” featured *inter alia* Malcolm Bills’ Dixielanders – Bills piano, Bill Munro trumpet, Bruce Gray clarinet, Eric Hopkins trombone, Ron Acfield bass, Bob Wright on drums and Shirley Appelt on guitar. She also played with the Mal Badenoch group that night.

On a wider musical front, she was on the air with drummer and vibes player Keith Rosenthal, and Lionel Dix violin, Allen Hunter piano and Milton Hunter bass. At the end of 1945 the “Adelaide Swingphonic Society” gave a concert, probably at the Astoria with bands led by Bob Limb, Malcolm Bills, Alf Holyoak and Jack Barter.

In his report, Dan Mahoney told the world that, “The only member of the fair sex playing, was Shirley Appelt on guitar, and she could have given an outstanding exhibition if given half a chance.”

Shirley’s brother Hugh played guitar and vibes and actually built several examples of the latter. We understand that Shirley is no longer with us.

Courtesy of the South Australian Jazz Archives “Backbeat”

Gwen Beresford

vocalist

Perhaps better known these days as Gwen Whitehouse – she married drummer Claude Whitehouse – Gwen was one of the “ladies who sing with the bands”, to quote Fats Waller. She was also one of the best of them.

Gwen’s apprenticeship around 1942-43 was with a group of up and comers, the “Swingcopators” – Dave Jenkins, trumpet, George Gummow and Lindsay Day, sax, Ron Lucas, piano and Claude Whitehouse, drums – who played for dances around their local area in the western suburbs. Pianist Wally Lund got her into Ron Wallace’s band at the Freemason’s Hall on North Terrace.

This put her in the company of trumpeters Jimmy Hogan, Kelly Brown and Don Fleming; trombonist Eric Hopkins and reed expert Syd Beckwith.

Later Claude introduced her to Palais Royal band-leader Colin Bergersen – “My girlfriend is a singer”, “Bring her up and we’ll give her a try”. So now Gwen was fronting one of the two leading bands in town. The other, at the Palladium was led by Harry Boake Smith and featured vocalist Doreen Govett. Gwen, Doreen and Dot Madigan were featured on radio station 5CL, “The Good Humoured Ladies”.

Gwen retired from the professional scene when a family came along, and Claude continued at the Palais, now under Maurie Le Doeuff, for some years into the fifties. When he too decided to give the game away, the chair was taken over by Gary Hains.

I chatted with Gwen at a recent Sunday afternoon “Lindy Hip” gig. She was dancing to and thoroughly enjoying the music to which she had significantly contributed so many years ago. Oh yes, and she still plays tennis.

Courtesy of the South Australian Jazz Archives “Backbeat”

Imelda Bourke

vocalist

Featured on early Adelaide television, Imelda grew up at Hamond in the lower flinders Range (SA). The family moved back to Adelaide at the end of the War and “around 1950” Imelda won one of the “croonette” contests they used to run at the Palais Royal.

This opened up all sorts of possibilities – singing at the Palais, featured on radio, “Moods and Melodies” and “My Song Goes Round the World”, working with Tom King, Alec Regan, Johnny Gredula, Bob Morgan and a host of others. Blessed with a good range, she used her contralto voice to good effect on the jazz numbers – “I’m bass now.”

Imelda married pianist Daryl Blackwell and her debut on television was four weeks and one day after the birth of their fourth child. Wally Lund set the music policy and the other musicians included Maurie Le Doeuff, Kelly Brown, Ian Drinkwater and Bill McKinnon.

She did “Showcase ‘65 and ‘67” and “In Melbourne Tonight”. She was on a couple of swing show with Bryce Rohde, Jack Brokensha and Erroll Buddle and recalls the virtuoso playing of pianist Don Waldock.

She adores Carmen McCrae, Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan and Billie Holliday and who can argue? Imelda has been featured in a couple of the recent cabaret festivals and we hope there is till a good deal more singing to come.

Courtesy of the South Australian Jazz Archives “Backbeat”

Penny Eames

vocalist

Penny Eames (nee Cruickshanks) claims she “fell in love” with Billie Holliday at age eleven and, from a purely musical point of view, one can think of few better mentors. At the outset, however, let us deal with the Holliday influence.

To characterize Penny as a mere Billie copyist is about as silly as to dismiss “Red” Allen as an Armstrong imitator. The influence is there but they – Penny and “Red” – I’m sure she doesn’t mind being in that company – have their own styles, and excellent styles they are.

At some stage, people stopped referring to Penny as Bob Cruickshanks’ daughter and started referring to Bob as Penny’s Dad and that is almost a direct quote from the man himself.

Penny grew up to the sound of Armstrong, Oliver, Morton, Bessie Smith and, of course, Billie Holliday, issuing forth from 78 r.p.m. records.

There was “Rhythm Unlimited”, later “The World Of Jazz”, Eric Child on the ABC on Saturday mornings, and, then the “boys” would come around for the inevitable jamming and drinking.

Bob was a member of the pioneering Port Jackson Jazz Band. Ken Flannery, John Sangster, Jimmy Somerville, George Thompson, Norm Wyatt and Dick Hughes were among the visitors, Dick ensuring that the keg was not left unbreached.

But the girl who wanted Kenny Ball’s “Midnight in Moscow” for her twelfth birthday could not escape the influence of contemporary popular music. By age fifteen, she was singing around Sydney in a vocal group called “The Pebbles”. They won a talent quest and sang in pubs until their tender ages came to light. Coffee lounges and 2UW’s lunch-time concerts filled the gap but then they left school and “The Pebbles” were no more.

In 1966, the family shifted to Adelaide, and at the end of the year, attended the Australian Jazz Convention in Kew. Trumpeter Tony Newstead had her sing with his band, and while Penny was less than impressed with her own performance, Roger Hudson, sitting in the audience, saw the possibilities. Back in Adelaide, he started her singing at The Taverns, firstly in Hindley Street and then Hindmarsh Square. At

the Somerset Hotel, she sang with Bruce Johnson, Bill Clark, Ted Kennedy, John Coultas, Dave Rankin and Ken Farmer.

She married trumpeter Graham Eames and they went off to the U.K. to experience the lively scene over there. Back here, now a mother, she joined the Bruce Gray band and recorded with them in 1972. Many of us still have "Fine and Mellow" and "Pennies From Heaven".

She sang with the Campus Six, and from 1972, was part of Dave Dallwitz's re-entry to the world of jazz. Call it, if you will, the "Marrakesh" period, one of Dave's more exotic compositions. When Dave wrote his "Ern Malley Suite", he had Penny's voice in mind. It was first performed at the Art Gallery in January 1973. The L.P. was issued to wide, critical acclaim. One of the admirers was Cleo Laine.

Two years later, she sang to a crowd of 6000 in the Apollo Stadium all protesting against the dismissal of the Whitlam government.

In 1976 she performed "Blue Notoriety" which, with a few changes of personnel, soon settled down to a line-up of Bruce Hancock piano, Frank Mulders bass, Graham Eames trumpet and Bob Cruickshanks reeds.

They were popular at the Southern Jazz Club, then in its infancy, but Penny was still singing with Bruce Gray and Dave Dallwitz gigs every Saturday night.

In 1976 Alan Leake organized the first Australian Jazz Party at the Park Royal Convention Centre in Melbourne. Don Anderson later claimed that Penny was the highlight of the week-end. High praise from a Victorian!

In more recent times, she has been a fixture at John Trudinger's Bob Barnard Jazz Parties. She toured Australia and overseas with Bob Barnard's band, recorded again with Dallwitz, "Gold Fever", formed the "Gladstone Jazz Bag", was part of the "Women in Jazz" series and lectured on jazz voice at Adelaide CAE.

She, along with Danny Hodgson, Guy Piercy and John Stephens performed at the first Glenelg Jazz Festival.

The Southern Jazz Club placed her in its first "Hall of Fame" list of nineteen performers.

Courtesy of the South Australian Jazz Archives "Backbeat"

Doreen Govett

pianist / saxophonist / vocalist

An evening at the Woodville Town Hall, soon after the War, would have featured a four-piece band, three of whom carried the name Govett. Leader and saxophonist Roy Govett saw to it that his daughters, Doreen and Betty, became good musicians. Betty played the piano and sang. Doreen played sax and piano and sang. The drummer was not related. She worked in Melbourne for a while.

Doreen has a very good ear. Down the track a little, on radio station 5KA, people would 'phone in requests and, if Doreen could not play them straight off, the caller won a prize. Very few did.

Recruited by Harry Boake Smith, she sang with his band at the Palladium until the 1948 storm partially unroofed the place. The dance scene was in decline so promoter Hughie Carmichael decided to close the place down. Boake Smith sailed off to the tropics and Doreen went on radio.

She became one of the leading lights of 5KA along with Bill Davies, Rex Heading, Jimmy Tonkin and Lionel Williams. Widowed in later years, she remarried – an old friend from way back – and they are living happily ever after in Gisborne, out of Melbourne.

Courtesy of the South Australian Jazz Archives "Backbeat"

Marlene Richards

vocalist

Marlene got her start on Kangaroos On Parade. Who didn't? But so many never consolidated that start. Marlene did, and then some. At a tender age, she was touring with Bob Fricker, Doug and Irene White and Johnny Mac and the Macmen.

At the Palais on North Terrace, she won a "croonette" contest accompanied by John Crossing and the Hi-Marks. On 5KA, she sang with the Bruce Gray all-stars and, on early television, age twelve, she featured as "the little girl with the big voice". She met and was impressed with Melbourne singer-musician Lana Cantrell.

Featured on Adelaide Tonight and with Bill Greenecklee at the Norwood Ballroom she then took off for Brisbane, the Gold Coast, Sydney and Melbourne – the Chevron Hotel, the Oceanic at Coogee and the St Kilda Chevron.

She has fond memories of the musicianship of Ricky May – sang with him at the Surfers Paradise Beer Garden – tenor player Ted White and Graham Trotman, one time drummer with Normie Rowe.

Back home, she joined up with Jerry Wesley and Freddie Payne at the Marryatville and sang with Rudi Rost for Ron Tremaine at the Lion and at Ayers House.

Married to trumpeter, pianist, arranger, composer Kerin Bailey, they headed off to Naracoorte where Kerin was teaching. They formed a group with pianist Audrey Huntley and their son Darren on drums. Kerin revived the local brass band and, from time to time, Marlene played bass drum in their street parades. As I heard myself saying a while ago, live long enough and you get to do everything!

They returned to the "big smoke" after seven years and Marlene went into the Gateway with Danny Hodgson, Billy Ross and either Dave Seidel or Mike Pank on bass. And then there were the "Smoking Sisters", a vocal trio with Sibyl Graham and Robyn Archer. She says they just naturally fell into a groove, rhythm and harmony exactly as they should be. Nor should we forget her singing on the Captain Matthew Flinders on the Port River with John Kelley and others. In the holiday season, this ran to four nights a week.

Marlene continues to sing on a regular basis in this town and at the jazz festivals around the country. She is a leading member of the strong South Australian contingent that performs at Halls Gap every February. On music generally, she cites,

as some of her models, Helen Forrest, Anita O'Day, Carmen McRae, June Christy and Sarah Vaughan and it is difficult to argue with that. She loves the sound of the early big bands and, again, we say, "Amen".

Singing comes easily to Marlene but she has always worked hard at her trade. For those singers who think they are overusing their voice, this down-to-earth lady has a message: "Get a life"! She has never had a singing lesson but fate, or good judgment, or a judicious admixture of both, ensured that she had a very sound grounding. She advises aspiring singers to listen to the recordings of the "old time" dance singers. "You can't beat the straight time" she says. "It is the best grounding you can get." Once you've got that down, you can go on to the fancy stuff.

Marlene Richards paid her dues from a very young age. She has never made a million but has been amply repaid by the joy of doing what she does best, and better than most – singing.

Courtesy of the South Australian Jazz Archives "Backbeat"

Jan Preston

Blues & Ragtime pianist

Acknowledged as one of Australia's leading female jazz and blues artists, Jan Preston was actually born in Greymouth, New Zealand.

A fulltime composer, songwriter and pianist, Jan is called Australia's *Queen of Boogie Woogie Piano*.

In the late 1970's she moved to New York for a brief time before settling in Sydney in 1980.

She has played at many music festivals in Australia, New Zealand and Europe. She has composed and performed music for silent films, and has written numerous drama and documentary film scores in both countries.

She has won awards for Best Film Score, and for Best Australian Female Blues Artist.

Jan has released several CD's and has received extensive airplay on the ABC and Radio New Zealand and in European countries including Belgium, Netherlands, Austria, Slovakia and Germany.

Emelia Wilmot

saxophonist

Melbourne based Emelia began her musical career as a traditional jazz saxophonist at the age of 9, securing her first jazz residency at the age of twelve.

Since then, she has played at many local and international venues and festivals, including South America, France, Morocco and two trips to Cuba with a wide range of performers and musical styles.

Emelia now practices as a Registered Music Therapist working in Special Education, adolescent and adult mental health, and refuges for young women, as well as furthering her musical performance career

Emelia performs in Melbourne band Cariño Son, and accompanies Jazz musician Sandro Donati's 'a Bandé di Barbé Sandro' on both soprano and alto saxophone. She performs on their recently released CD *Project Friûl* and has also appeared at the Apollo Bay Music Festival.

Clare Hansson

pianist

Clare Hansson is regarded as "Queensland's First Lady of Jazz". Through her passion for jazz piano and her dedication to composing, she has made significant contribution to jazz in Australia.

She has led the Clare Hansson Trio since 1980 being introduced to jazz by her late husband, bassist Bernie Hansson.

Clare's has released several CD recordings and her 2003 re-release "Azimuth" is a twelve-part suite inspired by the painting 'Revelation' by Dr Irene Amos.

Clare has completed a PhD in Jazz Music at Queensland University of Technology, focusing on the compositions, life and philosophy of her mentor, Jazz pianist, Marian McPartland.

Clare performs very regularly in Brisbane as well as popping up at festivals and events throughout Queensland and Australia at large.

Daina Jowsey

vocalist

Born in Melbourne, Daina Jowsey has been singing from a very early age.

She began her singing career with Four Part Invention, a jazz quartet who performed with the Australian Showband.

Daina has toured Australia with several leading cabaret artists and has performed in various jazz festivals, including Paynesville, Monbulk, The Grampian's, Inverloch, Montsalvat and Wangaratta Jazz Festival.

In June 2010 Daina released her first cd of jazz standards. It features her mum Helen on piano, her father Neil on bass, Lachlan Davidson on sax and Dean Cooper on drums.

The Daina Jowsey Quintet makes regular appearances at Melbourne's Dizzy's Jazz Club.

Helen Matthews

Vocalist / artistic director

Based on the West Coast, Helen's career spans over 50 years—from her earliest days with *JT and the Jazzmen*, a National TV series ABCTV—*Helen Matthews with a Little Help from her Friends* in 1971, to excelling as a jazz artist, producer and leader of her own ensembles. The list of jazz artists she has supported or played with includes *Stephane Grappelli, Rod McKuen, Ronnie Scott, Woody Herman, Don Burrows, Dave McKenna, James Morrison, Joe Chindamo and Judy Bailey* to name but a few.

'Helen Matthews set the Perth Festival alight with a stand-alone jazz festival that captivated all who attended with its unity of spirit and glittering array of international and local performers a cohesive and strongly managed series' - *The Australian 2003* —

Richard John (Fremantle International Jazz Festival).

'A complete stylist with brilliant scat technique, she is one of the finest jazz vocalists this country has produced.' *Melbourne Women's International Jazz Festival 2003.*

Jo Bloomfield

pianist

Jo Bloomfield started studying piano at the age of six, however her jazz career started with the formation of the Vintage Jazz and Blues Band (Brisbane) in 1973. She was a regular member of the band until 1997. She also played with a variety of Brisbane, Sunshine Coast and Gold Coast musicians and with many from overseas and interstate. In 1993 she travelled to New Guinea with Craig Berry's Jazzmania, and in 1994 performed at the Dresden International Jazz Festival and various other venues in Germany with Peter Strohkorb's Hot Gossip Jazz Band. She has been a regular participant at the annual Noosa Jazz Party since its inception in 1993.

In 2000 and 2003 she performed at the Bellingen Jazz Festival with Brett Iggulden and, in 2006 - 2009, with The Lounge Lizards from Bellingen. 2002 saw her performing at the inaugural Norfolk Island Jazz festival with Bellingen On The Rocks. She was invited to this event again in 2003. She was invited to New Zealand in 2005 for a 10-day tour performing with the Auckland-based Vintage Jazz Band which was judged a great success.

Jo is a member of the Tropical Dance Orchestra, a newly-formed group augmented by strings, flutes and guitars, featuring the music of Antonio Carlos Jobim. She is an integral part of Paul Hendon's Goodman Trio/Quartet. Then there is the Satin Bowerbirds & Blue Pegs, the East Coast Frisco Band as well as the Famous Few: bands formed from a wide range of Noosa, Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne musicians.

And, if all this isn't enough, Jo is a founding member of the Up the River Jazz Band which has had a resident Sunday gig at the Story Bridge Hotel for the last 17 years

Penny Eames

vocalist

Penny was born in Sydney in 1948. She grew up in a jazz environment: her father Bob Cruickshanks (alto sax and clt.) was an original member of the Port Jackson Jazz Band and played with many bands 'till his death in 1998.

Penny learnt violin and piano from the age of six and started singing whilst in high school getting gigs in pubs and clubs (although under-age). Jazz was her greatest love and after moving to Adelaide she joined the Bruce Gray Jazz Band in 1971 and sang with them for eight years. In 1972 she joined the Dave Dallwitz Band and sang and recorded with him for nine years.

She formed her own band in 1973 and although personnel and size have changed over the years, it is still working today.

She toured Australia and overseas with Bob Barnard's Jazz Band in 1977. She lectured in Jazz Voice at the University of S.A. from 1982 to 1984. Penny has been a jazz presenter with Radio 5MBS for the past ten years.

Anita Harris

vocalist

Anita Harris is a Melbourne based performer who has been performing Jazz in Australia for well over a decade.

She made her jazz debut at the 1993 Merimbula Jazz Festival, and was an instant sensation. Since then she has appeared at many jazz festivals and other public and private gigs around Melbourne. Favourite “employers” include the South Coast Jazz Club, Victorian Jazz Club, Victoria’s Grape Grazing Festival and a number of wineries who felt Anita’s smooth vocal styling was the perfect accompaniment to the year’s shiraz.

Over the years her performances have been well received, with one Jazzline reviewer referring to her as “the goddess of the festival” (1996).

She is most often seen in a band setting, favouring four and five piece groups, although with father Kim on piano the “Well-Versed Harris Duo” specialises in jazz interpretations of songs including their verses, many of which are rarely heard. Anita realised one dream when in 2006 she released a piano/vocal album representing her well-versed favourites.

Helen Jowsey

pianist / vocalist

New Zealand born Helen Jowsey received a thorough grounding in classical piano studies at the local convent. After arriving in Australia, she was soon in full-time work and appearing regularly on TV productions leading her own trio. Being in demand as a session musician, pianist and singer led to work on the Graham Kennedy, Don Lane, Mike Walsh shows and the ABC Showband. She can still be heard on the airwaves as a backing vocalist for Russell Morris, Ted Mulry and many others. Helen also accompanied many overseas and local artists, among them—Dame Vera Lynn, Max Bygraves, Phyllis Diller, Rolf Harris, Kamahl and Joan Rivers.

In the 80's she formed a successful vocal quartet, performing with the Australian Show Band, which later included Pippa Wilson.

She appeared at many of Australia's leading Jazz Festivals and venues. With this wealth of experience, Helen remains one of the most capable and entertaining musicians that the Melbourne music scene has to offer.

Daina Jowsey

vocalist

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The Daina Jowsey Quintet makes regular appearances at Melbourne's Dizzy's Jazz Club.

Ruby Page

vocalist

Ruby was born in New Zealand and has sung for as long as she can remember. She was naturally blessed with a rich, warm voice, an exceptional range and an innate gift for pitch and timing.

Since July, 2000 Ruby has been based in Melbourne, where she has sung with the city's most notable jazz musicians at numerous high profile venues.

Ruby has worked and experimented in many styles of music, and these days concentrates on what she likes most and does so well: her own vibrant interpretations of some of the best loved jazz standards in upbeat and funky Latin rhythms, as well as her own exciting material.

Asked to describe her unique style she once said, "I feel a strong connection with my past and a sense of wonder at each note when I sing - I bring my whole life's experience to the stage".

Anyone who has seen or heard Ruby perform anywhere agrees: she is a true entertainer. She 'lives' her songs, and her presence on any stage is a guarantee of an unforgettable performance.

'Madam' Pat Thompson

vocalist / cabaret artiste

Although Pat had been dancing and singing since childhood and then at the Tivoli Theatre in later life, it was not until the early eighties that she became well-known in the jazz field.

During a visit to Narooma Bowling Club in 1980 she was asked to get up and sing 'Frankie and Johnny' with the band. Trumpeter Jiri Kripac from Sydney was there and invited her to sing with his band in Tathra. She was then asked to work in a play in Canberra called *Georgie's Peep Show* - a play in which she played the part of a brothel madam - hence her stage name.

With David Bates, her pianist, Jiri Kripac, trumpet, Graham Walker on guitar and Tony King on bass guitar, the Ragtag Jazz Band, she toured Europe in 1985. In latter years she appeared regularly at the Spiegeltent, owned by David and always played to capacity audiences. A well-known and much-loved figure at numerous festivals and jazz conventions, Pat passed away in July 2011.

Pippa Wilson

vocalist

Pippa's singing career started out with rock, but after being invited to sing with her cousin Chris Ludowyk's band, the New Harlem Jazz Band in 1979, her career as a jazz singer quickly took off. She not only formed her own group playing at jazz clubs, festivals and other jazz venues, but also sang on the soundtrack of the feature film "Death of a Soldier".

Pippa has not only held long residences at most of the top hotels in Melbourne and interstate, but has also sung in Tokyo, Hong Kong, Jakarta, Bangkok and Singapore, and last year was invited to sing in New Orleans and Nashville, Tennessee where her version of "Crazy" wowed the American audiences.

Pippa is much in demand for gospel church services, where her deep and sensitive voice has been likened to 'champagne cut with bitters'.

Sri Lanka being her birthplace, Pippa has made several visits back there where she is welcomed with open arms.

Pippa has made several CDs, many of which are available from the Australian Jazz Museum.

Janet Seidel

vocalist / pianist

Janet has been named in the Penguin Guide of Jazz, UK, as Australia's '*first lady of jazz singing*'. She and her Trio have recently returned from an extensive tour of the UK and Europe where they enjoyed full houses everywhere including Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club in London.

In spite of her sophisticated international image, Janet is a country girl who grew up on a farm in South Australia. She began playing piano at an early age and later graduated from the University of Adelaide with a Bachelor of Music.

She taught High School before moving to Sydney to pursue her musical career and it wasn't long before she had taken Sydney and later Australia and Europe by storm. She returns to the northern hemisphere regularly where she appears in many countries including Japan.

A consummate performer and a class act, Janet is internationally regarded for her interpretation of the Great American Songbook, the music of Johnny Mercer, Cole Porter, Blossom Dearie and many others, that has stood the test of time.

Sweethearts of Rhythm

All-girl bands in the 1920s - 1940s

During the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s All-girl dance bands and orchestras worked on the margins of a profession dominated by men.

Women musicians have long played together, turning novelty and sex-appeal to advantage. Over a century has passed since the first all-woman orchestras made their mark on public.

All-girl Bands included names like the Tango Girls Jazz Band, Grace Funston's groups, the Magpie Ladies Orchestra, the Victorian Ladies Orchestra, Franki Stott and her Gay Collegians and Adelaide's Merry Melody Makers.

The Marion Lightfoot Orchestra from the mid 1930s is featured here.

Source: Kay Dreyfus, Sweethearts of Rhythm: The Story of Australia's All-Girl Bands and Orchestras to the End of the Second World War (Strawberry Hills: Currency Press, 1999)

Margie Lou Dyer

pianist / vocalist

In 1972, Margie Lou Dyer joined the Melbourne University Jazz Band and made her debut as a regular and active performer. Over the following three years she worked on campus, at private functions and intervarsity festivals and concerts, until the band's demise in 1974.

She was a member of the Nick Polites Jazz Band from 1975—1977 and then the Krazy Kats Jazz Band from 1979—1982. During this period she performed extensively at concerts, hotels and private functions.

After the disbandment of the Krazy Kats in 1988, she began a solo career as a singer/pianist. With a two-year residency at Johnny Come Lately's Restaurant in Red Hill and Burke County, South Melbourne and in a trio with Ken Evans and Allan Browne in Mornington.

From 1985 and 1988 Margie appeared with the Allan Browne Band at concerts, residencies and recording sessions, and at the Montsalvat and Wangaratta Jazz Festivals. Margie Lou also contributed to various recordings during that time, including "Jazz On A Saturday". Allan Browne with Red Richards", "Daily Jazz" and "Genre Jumping Jazz".

She also recorded her first solo CD "Souled Out".

Margie Lou makes regular appearances around Melbourne and is regular at the Stonnington Jazz Festival.

Des Tooley

vocalist / pianist

Born Amy Ruwald in 1896, Sydney based Des Tooley was known alternatively as *The Girl with the Unusual Voice* and *the Rhythm Girl*.

'Lady baritone' Tooley was Australia's first 'personality' vocalist who, in her day, had quite a following and was most active in the 1920s.

Recording in excess of thirty jazz tracks between July 1929 - July 1933 she was accompanied by Frank Coughlan on trombone, Abe Romain, clarinet and alto sax, and Bert Mars on clarinet and guitar, and pianist Beryl Newell

Active on radio, she appears not to have been a stage performer although she is reported as singing before the King and Queen in the Australian Radio News of 23rd February, 1934

In the 1930s and 1940s she continued to work occasionally on radio .

Beverley Sheehan

vocalist

Now established as one of Australia's leading jazz vocalists, Beverley Sheehan's career as a jazz singer did not begin until she was in her early thirties. However her interest in jazz began in her late teenage years.

She studied classical piano for 6 years and sang in the school choir and madrigal group with her sister, one of Australia's legends, Judith Durham of "The Seekers".

Beverley was given her start in the music business by Melbourne jazz legend "Smacka" Fitzgibbon in 1970 at "La Brochette" restaurant, and continued there for 2 more years with trumpet legend Frank Johnson.

Returning from overseas in 1977, her career took off in earnest as featured vocalist with Roger Bell's Pagan Pipers. This was followed by performances with Steve Waddell's Creole Bells and then, for many years, with Allan Leake's Storyville Allstars with whom she recorded 3 albums.

In the 1980s Beverley was part of the jazz-orientated floor show at Banjo's Theatre Restaurant, and then as part of the Melbourne Jazz Repertory Company. She also ran her own trio for 4 years at Melbourne's Hotel Le Meridien in the early 1990s.

Over the last 30 years Beverley has appeared at all major Jazz Festivals in Australia and has been a special guest at all the major Australian Jazz Clubs. She also presented five 2-hour productions for the very popular Capers Theatre Restaurant. Her long career has included TV appearances and tours overseas. She now runs her own group "Swing Shift".

Nonie Sadler

pianist

Nonie Sadler was born in the late thirties in a little place called Glenormiston South near Terang in the Western District of Victoria. She says there weren't a lot of jazz bands in the area.

Her mother (now 104) played piano in dance bands in the twenties and the six children all learnt piano. Nonie also played in dance bands in the fifties in a few country areas of Victoria.

Her introduction to jazz came much later when she was teaching in Melbourne in the mid-seventies. She used to go to the Manor House in the city and simply loved the bands.

Some quirk of fate, she says, led to her becoming one of the intermission piano players which was her entrée into joining the Toad's Krazy Kats band. She was with them for at least two years during which time she sometimes played gigs with other bands.

In the nineties Nonie operated a jazz venue in Hobart where she showcased some of Australia's best jazz musicians. Her own band *Nonie's Classic Jazz Players* was also often featured.

Nichaud Fitzgibbon

vocalist

Nichaud Fitzgibbon was born in Wycheproof Victoria (and apart from the race - The King of the Mountain - it's most famous export!)

Nichaud was born into a musical family and always surrounded by the good things in life — music, food and wine. She says that her musical destiny can perhaps be put down to her sitting on Louis Armstrong's knee at the age of 3. She was there along with her dad Smacka Fitzgibbon when Louis graced our shores.

Her Dad's records were her first influence. Her Grandmother Minnie (well known for her piano playing) was also a big influence and encouraged her to learn the piano at the age of 6.

Nichaud started performing with her brother Mark in the early 80s and performed at all the regular jazz gigs at that time before leaving for London in 1985 where she stayed and performed for 3 years.

On her return Nichaud recorded with the Moovin' and Groovin' Orchestra, started the popular band 'So Nice' with Jane Clifton and was asked to sing on numerous TV shows.

2001 saw her long-awaited CD 'After Hours' This reveals her broad musical interest from Bossa to Swing and features some of Melbourne's finest jazz musicians.

For the last decade or so Nichaud has performed regularly around Australia.

Carol Ralph

vocalist

In 1986 Carol walked into the “Star Hotel” in Goulburn Street, Sydney, and was elated to hear live music. It was Bill Dudley’s “New Zenith Band”, a New Orleans style band featuring Wally Temple, clarinet, John Edser, trombone and the leader was of course Bill Dudley. The meeting with Wally and John proved very positive for her, their encouragement, especially John Edser started her on her way to becoming a jazz singer. Wally Temple, a generous and sincere man, totally dedicated to jazz, welcomed them all into his home one night a week to practice.

Soon after that she met Kate Dunbar and with her advice and encouragement and their many hours together, received an incredible boost to her knowledge of jazz singers, especially Bessie Smith. Kate encouraged her so much, getting her to sit in with bands, especially with Roger Janes at the Unity Hotel in Balmain. These were wonderful days for Carol. She credits Roger as being a very important musician and friend to her, along with Kate and says the Sydney jazz scene moulded her into the singer she is today.

Carol has sung with many bands, all over Australia; has been to Japan with Geoff Bull’s band, to Switzerland with “The Spirit of New Orleans Jazz Band” - a band comprising Australian and New Zealand musicians led by Chris Williams and they also toured the south of England, a wonderful experience.

Carol’s repertoire is traditional, mainstream, blues and gospel. In recent years she has also worked with Laurie Bennett, Ray Alldridge and Ed Gaston. Carol also describes pianist Col Nolan as an inspiration “his feel was so right!”

Carol has made a few CDs and still loves the music, saying “it has enriched my life and I thank all those who have helped me on this journey”. You can catch up with Carol at several festivals and other functions both in New South Wales and other states.

Jan Preston

blues & ragtime pianist

Acknowledged as one of Australia's leading female jazz and blues artists, Jan Preston was actually born in Greymouth, New Zealand.

A fulltime composer, songwriter and pianist, Jan is called Australia's *Queen of Boogie Woogie Piano*.

In the late 1970's she moved to New York for a brief time before settling in Sydney in 1980.

She has played at many music festivals in Australia, New Zealand and Europe. She has composed and performed music for silent films, and has written numerous drama and documentary film scores in both countries.

She has won awards for Best Film Score, and for Best Australian Female Blues Artist.

Jan has released several CD's and has received extensive airplay on the ABC and Radio New Zealand and in European countries including Belgium, Netherlands, Austria, Slovakia and Germany.

Clare Hansson

pianist

Classically trained Clare Hansson is now regarded as "Queensland's First Lady of Jazz". Through her passion for jazz piano and her dedication to composing, she has made significant contribution to jazz in Australia.

After being introduced to jazz by her late husband, bassist Bernie Hansson, Clare began her serious jazz involvement at the 1976 AJC. She then played with Bob Barnard and Rick Price going on to lead her own group, the Clare Hansson Trio from 1980.

Clare has completed a PhD in Jazz Music at Queensland University of Technology, focusing on the compositions, life and philosophy of her mentor, Jazz pianist, Marian McPartland.

She has released several CD recordings including her 2003 re-release "Azimuth".

Clare performs very regularly in Brisbane as well as popping up at festivals and events throughout Queensland and Australia at large.

Emelia Wilmot

saxophonist

Melbourne based Emelia began her musical career as a traditional jazz saxophonist at the age of 9, securing her first jazz residency at the age of twelve.

Since then, she has played at many local and international venues and festivals, including South America, France, Morocco and two trips to Cuba with a wide range of performers and musical styles.

Emelia now practices as a Registered Music Therapist working in Special Education, adolescent and adult mental health, and refuges for young women, as well as furthering her musical performance career.

Emelia performs in Melbourne band Cariño Son, and accompanies Jazz musician Sandro Donati's 'a Bandé di Barbé Sandro' on both soprano and alto saxophone. She performs on their recently released CD *Project Friûl* and has also appeared at the Apollo Bay Music Festival.

Elvie Simmons

vocalist

Young Blues singer Elvie Simmons, having been seduced by the sounds of Bessie Smith, Adelaide Hall and Ma Rainey, acquired a following through her Negro-type jazz interpretations .

Introduced to jazz singing by Graham Coyle, and acknowledging a great debt to Max Collie, Elvie has gone on to perform with several groups including *The Great Jazz Revival Band, Didyouever, Norah's Nork Gnawers, Mike Messenger's Jazz Band, the Original Cornerhouse Jazz Band, Sweet Substitute, Forty and Tight, and The Sunshine Band.*

She has performed in Adelaide, the Blue Mountains NSW, in London, Melbourne and Fremantle.

Elvie fondly remembers the 41st Australian Jazz Convention in Adelaide (1986) as "a great reunion with some of my best friends".

She also recalls the Victorian Musicians' Benefit Fund's *Jazz Among the Gum Trees* as "lovely times singing with Dave Eggleton and Graham Coyle".

Fem Belling

vocalist / violinist

South African born jazz vocalist and violinist, Fem Belling, has exploded onto the Melbourne jazz scene. Her versatile voice and powerful stage presence lends authenticity, verve and warmth to the jazz classics.

Born of an artistic family, Fem's father is a renowned jazz pianist and made sure she was bathed in the sounds of all of the jazz greats. She was also bewitched by the spell of Cole Porter, Rogers and Hammerstein, Gershwin and the magic of the MGM musical and she pursued an international career in Musical Theatre.

This ARIA nominated artist has sung and played with many of the jazz greats from South Africa, London and Australia and can be seen in Melbourne's top music venues. She joined the up and coming jazz vocal group 4Play in London and was chosen to perform for Her Majesty The Queen at the Royal Variety Show in 2007.

Throwing her own spin on jazz standards and paying homage to the Jazz Greats, Fem showcases her passion for scatting and her sheer joy of making music.

Kerrie Biddell

vocalist

Kerrie Biddell began singing in 1968 when she joined a pop group called “The Affair”. She stayed with the group for 2 years during which time the band won the annual “Battle of the Sounds” contest and a trip to England.

Towards the end of 1970 she became the featured vocalist with Australia’s most successful big band—Daly-Wilson Big Band.

In 1972 she went to the US and Canada. She returned in 1973 and spent the rest of the year doing TV, concerts and recording the highly acclaimed ABC programme “Kerrie Biddell & Friends” which ran for 32 weeks.

She also recorded her first solo album which won the “Best Female Vocal Album of the Year”. In 1974 she returned to the US to represent Australia at Expo ‘74 in Spokane, Washington, then to L.A. to appear on the Merv Griffin Show and finally to Las Vegas to work at the MGM Grand.

She returned to Australia, and in 1975 joined the group “Compared to What”. This band was together for about 10 years. Kerrie continued to work almost exclusively with Sydney pianist Julian Lee in jazz concerts and TV shows.

Since 1982 Kerrie has also been a lecturer of the Jazz Diploma course at the Conservatorium of Music in New South Wales.

Kate Dunbar

vocalist / educator

Kate has always been a singer, at home, school and on radio with Uncle Tom's Gang at 2GB after school. At 14 she started singing lessons with Cecily Atkins as a mezzo soprano, singing classics and being included in madrigal groups and in student concerts.

In 1942 she changed teachers and was then taught by Marianne Mathy who taught her Lieder and some operatic arias. She wanted Kate to change voices at this stage and wanted to re-train her voice as a contralto. Although she grew up in the jazz era, dancing to the strains of the Swing Bands and listening to jazz, her real love was the classics.

Returning from a trip to Europe in 1952 she was introduced to the local jazz scene by the Paramount Jazz Band. She eventually was invited to play guitar with the band and sing vocals. She continued to work with this band as vocalist for eight years.

For the past 22 years Kate has continuously run the highly successful Jazz Singers Workshop and at the age of 88 still wows her audiences whenever she sits in with a band or forms a group of her own at Jazz Conventions and Festivals.

She gives full credit to the fact that she has always been backed by the best musicians in the country and continues to learn from them.

Margret Roadknight

vocalist / guitarist

Born in Melbourne in 1943 Margret started singing at a very early age — school and church choirs, harmonising with her mother and sister, singing along to radio or record player whilst jotting down lyrics. At first she disliked the ‘fol-de-rol’ type folk songs and declined to take singing as a subject to avoid being cast in school musicals.

Her tastes changed when she started absorbing the recordings of **Harry Belafonte** (*calypsos, work songs, lullabies, etc.*) and **Paul Robeson** (*spirituals, international anthems, etc.*) and **Mahalia Jackson’s** (*gospel songs along with Irish parlour songs*) at home, and **R’n’B, Weavers** and **Kingston Trio** ballads over the radio.

After matriculating Margret taught arts & crafts, games & sport to kids from 3 to 17 for two and a half years. She then got involved in the coffee lounge scene and thus started a hectic period of juggling a 9-5 job with up to 5 nights a week singing and playing guitar.

Margret is widely regarded, both here and overseas, as a legend of the Australian music scene, and fondly regarded for her hit version of the Australiana classic “Girls In Our Town” in 1973.

Since these early days Margret has spent her life performing, travelling and recording.

Nicki Parrott

bassist / vocalist

Born in Newcastle, Australia, Nicki started her musical training with the piano at the age of four, and soon after took up the flute as well. She continued to play flute and piano throughout her school years but switched to double bass at the age of 15 because her sister Lisa, who plays alto sax, wanted a bassist for her group.

After completing high school, Nicki moved to Sydney to study jazz at the NSW Conservatorium of Music and shortly after began to play with well-known Australian musicians such as Mike Nock, Dale Barlow, Paul Grabowsky, Bernie McGann and Ten Part Invention.

After winning an Australian Young Achievers Award, the Arts Council of Australia granted her the funds to go to New York in May 1994 to study with internationally acclaimed bassist Rufus Reid.

Since June 2000 Nicky has continued her successful career in the USA, playing with such luminaries as Les Paul, Clark Terry, Michel Legrand, Dick Hyman, Warren Vache, Howard Alden, Ken Peplowski, Red Holloway, Bucky Pizzarelli et al.

She has also played at major festivals in the USA, including the Mary Lou Williams Jazz Festival and the Lionel Hampton Jazz Festival. She has also played in Switzerland, UK, Poland etc.

Judith Durham

Vocalist/pianist

Early in life Judith believed her future would be as a pianist. She went on to gain her Associate In Music (A.Mus.A.) in classical piano as a pupil of world-renowned concert pianist Ronald Farren Price at the Melbourne University Conservatorium, with her first professional engagement in the arts playing piano for a ballet school.

In 1961, aged 18, she was ready to begin classical vocal training. One night, just for fun, she 'sat in' with a trad jazz band at a local dance called "Memphis" and found instant success performing blues, gospels and jazz standards of the 1920s and 1930s, also developing as a serious ragtime pianist. At 19 she recorded her first EP "Judy Durham with Frank Traynor's Jazz Preachers".

She soon teamed up with Athol Guy, Keith Potger and Bruce Woodley (the Seekers) singing acoustic four-part harmony folk and gospel at the Melbourne coffee lounge "The Treble Clef", whilst still singing with various jazz bands other nights. The Seekers, with Judith, set sail for 10 weeks in London in 1964 on ss "Fairsky", singing for their supper en route. And as they say, the rest is history.

In 1968 Judith left "The Seekers", married her pianist Ron Edgeworth, and they toured together for the next 25 years until Ron's untimely death from Motor Neurone Disease in 1994.

Judith continues with her singing career and in June/July 2012 starts her "Colours Of My Life" solo tour of Australia and has released a new CD with the same title.

Sandy Evans

Tenor and soprano saxophone / composer

Sandy Evans is an internationally renowned saxophonist and composer with a passion for improvisation and new music. Sandy was awarded an OAM for her work as a musician in 2010. She also received the Inaugural Bell Award for Australian Jazz Musician of the Year 2003, a Young Australian Creative Fellowship[, APRA Award for Jazz Composition of the Year, two Mo Awards and three ARIA Awards.

She leads the Sandy Evans Trio, and co-leads the internationally acclaimed Clarion Fracture Zone. She is a member of the Australian Art Orchestra, Ten Part Invention, The Catholics, Austral, YSIS, Kim Sanders and Friends and the saxophone quartet SNAP. In 2004, together with Tony Gorman she launched the critically acclaimed 8 piece ensemble GEST8. Sandy toured nationally with her trio in 2010 with the assistance of Sound Travellers.

Sandy has a keen interest in Indian classical music and is a student of Sarangan Sriranganathan. In January 2009 she traveled to Chennai, India with the assistance of an Australia Council study grant to study Carnatic music with Guru Mani and B.V. Balasai. Sandy is currently undertaking a Masters at Macquarie University, researching Carnatic Jazz intercultural music. She has recorded a CD with Sruthi Laya as part of her research. Sandy toured with Five Elements in 2010. She collaborates regularly with Sydney-based Indian musicians Sarangan Sriranganathan and Bobby Singh.

Outside of Australia Sandy has toured in Edinburgh, Canada, Russia, China, Estonia, Lithuania, Denmark, Holland, Italy, Germany, Finland, Singapore, India, Thailand as well as all the major festivals in Australia. She has been featured in several TV programs for the ABC and Scottish television as well as radio broadcasts on the ABC, BBC, WDR (Germany). She appears in the jazz documentaries *Beyond el Rocco* and *Dr Jazz*. She has been featured on over 30 albums.

Further information on Sandy can be obtained from her website www.sandyevans.com.au from which the above has been taken.

Andrea Keller

Jazz pianist and composer

Three-time ARIA Award winning jazz pianist Andrea Keller is best known for her original ensemble 'The Andrea Keller Quartet' and her recording of 'The Bartok Project'. The inaugural winner of the MCA/Freedman Foundation Jazz Fellowship in 2001 has released many albums as leader and also includes two Bell Awards among her achievements (2003, 2008).

Andrea has performed with jazz greats John Surman (UK), Bobby Shew (USA), Allan Browne, Barry Duggan, Sandy Evans, Bernie McGann, Dale Barlow and Brian Brown. She has made important contributions to such contemporary ensembles as 'Keller/Murphy/Browne', Jamie Oehler's 'Small World Ensemble', the Geoff Hughes Collective, Tim Wilson/Andrea Keller duo, the Paul Williamson Quartet, Kynan Robinson's 'En Rusk', Sam Anning Quartet, 'Porchlight', Gian Slater ensemble, the Black Arm Band, Geoff Hughes/Andrea Keller duo, and the Bennetts Lane Big Band (an 11-piece ensemble which performs the eclectic compositions of its members).

Courtesy website www.andreakellerpiano.com

Patsy O'Neill

vocalist

Patsy O'Neill commenced singing as a young teenager, winning several competitions. She sang in Pubs in East London, mostly with Jazz Trios. Shortly after she was given a large part in a musical revue and went on to perform on television.

Patsy was invited to the USA to take part in the stage show "Oklahoma" and stayed for five years performing in cabarets.

She returned to London and performed at major hotels such as The Dorchester, Savoy, Ritz and exclusive Country Clubs.

In 1972 Patsy and her young son came to Melbourne and within a short time was appearing on Chanel 7's The Penthouse Club as well as being the resident singer at Geoff Brooke's Steak Cave for a period of approximately three years before deciding to leave show business and take on other responsibilities.

In 1994 she got back into music after strong encouragement from friends and musicians and she formed a band to perform at Jazz Festivals. Other opportunities occurred from this and in 1998 she released a CD entitled "Blame it on my Youth" which was well received both here and overseas and resulted in Patsy being invited back to the USA to perform in a musical revue.

Patsy was born in 1935 and is still performing with well respected Melbourne musicians at Jazz Festivals and other local venues.

Dorothy Baker

vocalist

Dorothy began her singing career following a relative entering her into several radio competitions at the age of sixteen.

Although she had no formal training at this stage she actually won some of these competitions.

She subsequently learned her craft from other musicians and was offered her first professional job at Zeigfields and Hawthorn Town Hall in 1955.

Dorothy became a pioneer in Australia's television industry and appeared regularly on various variety shows on the ABC, Channel 9 (In Melbourne Tonight, Ford Show, Delo & Daly, Bert Newton Show, Don Lane Show, and Channel 7 (The Late Show, Noel Ferrier, Bert Newton, Sunnyside Up, Saturday Night Live, Dorothy Baker Show 'Portrait of a Star' (TVW 7 Perth).

She also toured the international cabaret scene and had several hit records, appearing on the same bill as Rolf Harris, Tony Hancock, Annie Ross, Frankie Vaughan, David Frost and Acker Bilk to name a few.

Dorothy's voice has been described as having "the emotion of Patsy Cline and the country girl of Tammy Wynette together with the straight talking of Dolly Parton, the range of Whitney Houston, plus the soul of Aretha and the volume of Tina Turner".

Mix them all up with Vera Lynn's ability to sing straight from the heart and Dorothy will sing up a storm...or a teardrop or two.

Dorothy still is performing at RSL Clubs, Parties, Show Biz & Entertainers Clubs, Retirement Villages etc. and her philosophy is to keep performing—if you don't use it you lose it.