

Peggy Stern is as well-known as a composer as she is known for her fine piano playing. She arrived at jazz via classical music, R&B, and salsa. Her music has a particularly broad ethnic base -- in addition to European and American classical music, Peggy's music draws from Brazilian, African, Jewish, Irish, Cuban, and traditional jazz influences. Eclectic indeed!

Peggy has composed, played, recorded, and toured in a wide variety of situations: from solos to octets to jazz choruses. Her compositions range from highly original pieces to reharmonized jazz standards. "Everything she writes wants to dance," says Ken Dais of Jazziz.

Peggy's background would account for her varied musical tastes. She began playing Classical piano at an early age, continuing her studies at the Eastman School of Music, and finishing a Masters Degree, still in Classical music, at the New England Conservatory. And then she began to improvise. While living in San Francisco, she played in salsa bands, notably Azteca and Supercombo with Benny Vallarde. She did a stint in an R&B band (called Cat's Cradle) with singer Linda Tillery, and was "instructed" by Paul Jackson (bass) and Mike Clark (drums) of Herbie Hancock's Headhunter band.



Subsequently, Peggy moved to New York, absorbing the piano stylings of the greats, such as Jimmy Rowles and Tommy Flanagan. Peggy has worked and toured with many wonderful musicians: Lee Konitz, Diane Schuur, Jay Clayton, Gary Peacock, Gene Bertoncini, Bud Shank, Red Holloway, Billy Drewes, Machito, Puck Fair, Bobby Shew, Gerry Mulligan, Eddie Henderson, Emily Remler, to name a few.

Peggy has toured throughout Europe, the US, Canada, and Japan. She recently returned from successful first tour of Australia, having played the Manly Jazz Festival, the Basement (Sydney), Bennett's Lane (Melbourne), and several other venues.

In addition, Peggy has worked as an educator for the past 20 years, at colleges in the US. She has given workshops throughout Europe (Switzerland, Sweden, Denmark, Italy), and the US.

A few years ago, Peggy became interested in jazz chorus. Having been raised singing in choirs, she began writing for vocal groups, both standards and originals. One of her compositions, "Lunasea" is featured on Brazilian Rhapsody with Lee Konitz. Two more choir originals will appear on her next CD:

"New Rain" and "Sunbath" which was first recorded by Woody Shaw on Love Dance on Muse Records.

PEGGY'S NEW YORK MUSICAL HISTORY

At Stan Getz's memorial service several years ago, Peggy was introduced to Lee Konitz, who had heard Peggy with Marian McPartland on "Piano Jazz" the previous week. He liked her compositions, and their subsequent collaboration led to their first CD, Lunasea in 1992 on the Soul Note label. It featured Vic Juris on guitar, Guilherme Franco on percussion, bassist Harvie S, and drummer Jeff Williams.

The following year, Philology Records released The Jobim Collection, a duo including four reharmonizations of Jobim's tunes. Peggy's next album was a trio CD on Philology as well, entitled Pleiades featuring Ben Allison on bass, and Jeff Williams on drums.

In 1995, Peggy collaborated with the late saxophonist Thomas Chapin, yielding the CD, The Fuchsia on the Koch label. This CD features Drew Gress on bass and Bobby Previte on drums.

In 1997, Room Enough with Harvie S and Jeff Williams on drums was released. Peggy's next project, a CD entitled Actual Size featuring 3 horns, rhythm section, and on two songs a 33-voice choir was released in 2000. The music is all original and features Ron Horton on trumpet, John McKenna on saxophone and Art Baron on trombone. The rhythm section includes Bernard Purdie playing drums on 3 cuts, Tony Moreno playing drums on the others. Harvie S and Arthur Kell share the bass chair, and Memo Acevedo is featured on percussion. This is an ambitious, long-term project and it represents a departure for Peggy in scope and concept with the use of horns with choir, horns in fugue, and funky, danceable rhythms all serve to make it accessible to a wide cross-section of listeners.