

TRACY LOVE



TERRI LYNE CARRINGTON

BY ANDERS GRIFFEN

Three-time Grammy Award-winning musician Terri Lyne Carrington's prodigious jazz drumming career began at a young age. Sitting in with Oscar Peterson at the Globe Jazz Festival, she was heard by the founders of Berklee, who offered her a scholarship at age 11. By 14 she was working professionally and played with many of the greats who traveled to Boston. At 16, she made an independent record, *TLC And Friends*, with George Coleman, Kenny Barron and Buster Williams, and at 18 she moved to New York. At 23, she toured with Wayne Shorter, Stan Getz and David Sanborn and made the Grammy-nominated record *Real Life Story* before moving to Los Angeles, where she joined the band on *The Arsenio Hall Show*. She continues to manage a successful career as a performing artist and educator, both independently and as the Zildjian Chair in Jazz Performance at the Global Jazz Institute at Berklee College of Music.

The New York City Jazz Record: The ACS Trio with [pianist] Geri Allen and [bassist] Esperanza Spalding is at the Village Vanguard in December. Are they also with you during your busy month of travel in November?

Terri Lyne Carrington: No, we haven't played in probably two years, but we have one show in November at SFJAZZ. I'm going to Istanbul and London with the Mosaic Project and I have a Money Jungle gig in Blue Bell, PA. I also have a concert at the Monk Institute out in California in November.

TNYCJR: It's great that you can keep all of these different projects flowing.

TLC: I kind of learned that from [trumpeter] Lester Bowie. He was involved with four groups and I always thought that was remarkable. He was in the Art Ensemble of Chicago, the group called *The Leaders* and he had *Brass Fantasy* and another band, *Roots to the Source*. He had those four groups working all the time, so I decided to take a page out of his book by being involved. I've led bands of mine, like the Mosaic Project and Money Jungle, based on the recordings I did, and then some co-led bands, the trio with Geri and Esperanza and another trio with Geri and David Murray—we have a new CD coming out next year that was just recorded called *MCA Power Trio*. I'm also doing some work next year with Wayne Shorter's quartet.

TNYCJR: Have you ever called anyone out for not apparently tuning in or calling on the spirit?

TLC: Sometimes I will give opportunities to young people; I'll hire recent graduates from Berklee, so sometimes I have to whip them a little bit more into shape, only because they don't have experience. Everything is different now with young people. There are some people that are really hungry and that are coming at it from the traditional values, but then there's a lot that, I'm not trying to put down a generation, but, you know, they don't do the work,

maybe not quite as prepared, or... you have to really force them to take every opportunity as seriously as possible. I don't mind being a little bit hard on them because I think it will help them in the future.

TNYCJR: You said "traditional values". Can you articulate that a little more?

TLC: Basically I mean having a little more reverence for your elders. When I think how the elders are held in high esteem in other cultures, other countries, in the jazz tradition that has been the case. You would follow somebody around, you would check out what kind of cereal they like to eat in the morning and all of it would feed your understanding of them, which in turn would feed your understanding of the music. I don't see quite as much of that going on anymore. Also, the level of focusing, being able to focus on whatever your hobby or work, just having that ability to focus on that and stick to it. I think it's because of the internet, video games, videos in general and TV. Everything is going by so fast. I think there's something to be said about some old-school values in the way of looking at things, especially with art, because I think you need a little bit of time to digest, you know?

TNYCJR: How do you prepare this new breed of college-educated jazz student for a career, because many are probably teaching as opposed to performing?

TLC: One thing I will say, I've definitely noticed a higher level of playing in high school—I've got a high school program at Berklee College of Music. I think these band directors at the high school level have done remarkable work and that makes it so the college levels might be a little stronger too—I haven't been to enough other colleges to judge that, but I imagine. I'm always amazed at the thousand people or so graduating each year from Berklee and I always wonder: they keep tossing out that many music majors from one place, I wonder what they're going to do? But there are so many different areas of expertise in the music business that we need to prepare people for. The great thing about Berklee is that they have to play an instrument to get into the school. So, if [they become] a journalist, a music business major or anybody at a record company or streaming company or wherever, if they are a Berklee graduate, they've actually studied an instrument, so your conversation with them is slightly more leveled than with somebody that's never played an instrument at all. So, I think that part is good. Some people graduate and think that they are going to go be a player and they majored in performance, but it's difficult. Not everybody's going to reach it in the way they think they will. But the beauty of all those different classes that they've taken at Berklee, I think they're able to much more quickly parlay that into some kind of other career in music or something related to music and I think that's a great thing; the more music-

conscious, jazz-conscious, creative music-conscious people in the world the better.

TNYCJR: One of the big changes is that the number of college level jazz programs has grown exponentially. I've heard some elders express that there are not enough qualified teachers to impart the history and significance of community in the music.

TLC: There has to be a balance between the history and looking toward the future. I think right now it's an extremely exciting time in jazz. I didn't feel this way in the '80s or the '90s. I don't know why, maybe I wasn't

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ready to feel this way. But I do feel there is so much more music happening now with younger musicians playing creative music. It's extremely exciting. There's so much out there I can't even listen to it all. It keeps me awake at night, trying to check out something new. Young musicians in jazz are merging all these different styles and that's exciting. Jazz was always a music that was moving forward. You have some players that look at it like more like a classical music, something that you repeat, and I think that's important too, to bring an awareness to great music that was done how ever far back you want to go, but it's just as important to acknowledge the energy of what's happening now. At my age, I'm kind of at a crossroads: I really dig the new stuff and I'm really interested in finding out more about the old stuff; it's exciting, it's inspiring. So, I think you have to balance all that out. I think it has to do with your personality: maybe your conscience would like to constantly hold on to what you know. The people that have mentored me, Jack DeJohnette and Wayne Shorter, people like that, they're always looking for the new thing, they're always moving forward. They inspire me. I can't be less progressive than them. [laughs]

TNYCJR: Since around 2010, with the Mary Lou Williams Women In Jazz Festival, followed by the Mosaic Project and the ACS Trio, you are in ensembles consisting of all women.

TLC: I don't really have the answer to the women in jazz issue. It's very sensitive to me. I haven't gone through what a lot of women have. I haven't had any problems in my career, for the most part. Of course, there's always going to be something, how we feel something was done unfairly, but, for the most part, I've had a really great career. There are people that don't have that kind of experience and it's real to them and I always want to be sensitive to that. On the other hand, I understand the thought process of, just what you said, highlighting women in jazz or other areas that draw more attention to it. It's kind of like the same question about Affirmative Action and how people have mixed feelings about that. I know I have not wanted to be considered in a sub-group of any sort, just simply a musician. Either you think I'm good or you don't. You have to bring awareness to any minority situation if there are people that are not aware. But I do feel that these days, in general, people are becoming more aware of women's abilities to do things in male-dominated fields. Is it equal or completely fair yet? No, I'm sure, but I think the awareness is where it's not so shocking to see a woman doing something in a male-dominated area and I think that's a great first step to hopefully getting to a point where you don't have to have organizations that focus on women. But I don't feel it will ever be exactly equal, I just don't. Maybe it's just an aggressive thing to play jazz, maybe there's an aggressive nature to it. I know there is on the drums.

TNYCJR: Is any of the intention of these all-women ensembles to address this or is it just about the music?

TLC: It was really simple for me, one day I looked up and I was playing with a lot of women. I had a quartet gig and I called Geri and Esperanza and Tineke Postma. There was a quartet gig in Israel and I just called them because I was hearing their sound. I didn't think about their gender and when that moment hit me I said, "Oh, this is something to celebrate now" and I felt like I wouldn't have been able to do that 20 years earlier. So, that was the seed for me for The Mosaic Project and then I just kept adding sounds. It was just a celebration, kind of that simple. It was not as much of a political statement, maybe, as some people thought about it. The second Mosaic Project is out now, because there

were people I wanted to work with but ran out of time and space and all of that on the first one. Also, I tried to keep the first one focused on the acoustic side of jazz and there were other female instrumentalists that I loved playing with that focus a little bit more on groove-oriented music or electric-based jazz. I wanted to include that but couldn't do it all with the first one. The new CD [*The Mosaic Project: LOVE and SOUL*] came out in August, with Natalie Cole, Chaka Kahn, Ledisi, Chanté Moore, Jaguar Wright, Lalah Hathaway, Oleta Adams, Paula Cole, Lizz Wright, Valerie Simpson and Nancy Wilson. It's a CD I'm very proud of.

TNYCJR: How important is it to own your art in order to help insure your financial success?

TLC: When you're younger, you may not be able to do that because not everybody knows who you are and everything. I think when you're older you have to think about that and you have, hopefully, more money to invest in yourself. As soon as I understood that I need to invest in myself, my career took off. It was a nice, direct outcome. I think more and more the mindset of other people financing you and your product has changed. I make my albums myself and I partner with a label. I hand them a finished product and I license it to them, which is very different than just having a record deal. When you license you own your product and you license for a certain amount of time. That's my model and it works for me. It takes my own financial investment, as well as time. The more time I've invested in myself, my career started to do better. So, I'm a big believer in that. ❖

For more information, visit terrylynecarrington.com. Carrington is at *Village Vanguard* Dec. 15th-20th. See *Calendar*.

Recommended Listening:

- Terri Lyne Carrington—*TLC and Friends* (CEI, 1981)
- Mulgrew Miller—*Work!* (Landmark, 1986)
- Gary Thomas—*Till We Have Faces* (JMT, 1992)
- Terri Lyne Carrington—*Jazz Is A Spirit* (ACT, 2001)
- Terri Lyne Carrington—*Structure* (ACT, 2003)
- Terri Lyne Carrington—*Money Jungle: Provocative in Blue* (Concord, 2012)

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instrumentalist does, Lynn brings together the best of both spheres. Lynn has a Norma Winstone-influenced voice, and Ms. Winstone returns the favor by singing on Lynn's lovely "Upon the Hill". Gareth Lockrane's *The Strut* has nifty cover art combining the arty/cubist Prestige Records-in-the-'50s style with Batman—stylistically it's soul jazz (or groove jazz, for younger readers) with some interesting variations on the palette. It's vividly imaginative yet full of Saturday night strut as any Johnny Hammond or Big John Patton session.

So, despite the (usually justifiable) angst many musicians and music devotees have about the music biz, it's good to know that someone is fighting the good fight and scoring several victories along the way. Janisch's Whirlwind label personifies the dictum "If you want something done right, do it yourself", taking care of business and making available some super-fine singular sounds for global consumption, and isn't that a heart-swelling success story we can all enjoy? ❖

For more information, visit whirlwindrecordings.com. Artists performing this month include Samuel Blaser at *Nublu* Dec. 10th, *Ibeam Brooklyn* Dec. 11th-12th and 15th with Max Johnson and *Cornelia Street Café* Dec. 13th; Joel Harrison at *Roulette* Dec. 1st; John O'Gallagher at *Roulette* Dec. 1st with Joel Harrison; Jochen Rueckert at *Cornelia Street Café* Dec. 10th with Lage Lund, 12th with Guillermo Klein and 16th with Randy Ingram and *Bar Next Door* Dec. 15th with Peter Brendler; and JC Sanford at *Roulette* Dec. 1st with Joel Harrison. See *Calendar*.

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The second day's afternoon segment was a stroke of brilliance. The Thing—saxophonist Mats Gustafsson, bassist Ingebrigt Håker Flaten and drummer Paal Nilssen-Love—were invited to perform, but not together. Gustafsson improvised unaccompanied on baritone, tenor and slide saxophones, working with a different logic than other solo performers—small chunks of sound (like rubbing his stubble against his reed) rather than lengthy threads. Some of his pieces were named for Finnish words describing esoteric skiing conditions. The audience was reminded that music is the sound of a person battling with an inert piece of metal but Gustafsson usually won. Nilssen-Love's Large Unit was an hour of bombast from the full 10-piece group (featuring leading Scandinavian lights such as trombonist Mats Åleklint, tuba player Per-Åke Holmlander and alto saxophonist Klaus Holm), leavened by smaller groupings no less intense. The band's closing "Culius" featured brassy fanfares, groovy cinematic surges and a closing drum battle between the leader and Andreas Wildhagen. Håker Flaten's Austin-based The Young Mothers, in what was the second hearing for this reviewer, worked more cohesively, as the sextet (saxophonist Jason Jackson, trumpeter/ MC Jawwaad Taylor, guitarist Jonathan Horne, vibraphonist/drummer Stefan Gonzales and drummer Frank Rosaly) stitched together free jazz, hip-hop, punkish metal with fewer seams showing.

The evening portion featured alto/soprano/baritone saxophonist Roy Nathanson as a guest of French group Papanosh, playing the music of Charles Mingus; and Colin Stetson in duo with violinist Sarah Neufeld. Papanosh revived Mingus' burbling swing without being slaves to his forms—a bass/inside piano duet on "Los Mariachis", for example. Nathanson showed his other side in a Beat-style poetry recitation on waiting for the B Train in the snow and his baritone melted butter on "Funeral Boogaloo". Stetson's remarkable technique on tenor and baritone saxophones and paper-clip contra alto clarinet (mic'd in a secret recipe) in tandem with Neufeld's string minimalism created stunning soundscapes. There was classical rigor, tribal exhortation, industrial barrage and folksy chant across 8 pieces and 60 minutes, never less than full control of every breath and bow swipe.

The two penultimate sets of the festival showed why it is worth a trip overseas to catch bands that will never come stateside. Life and Other Transient Storms is trumpeter/flugelhornist Susanna Santos Silva (Portugal) and alto/soprano saxophonist Lotte Anker (Denmark) with the Swedish "rhythm section" of pianist Sten Sandell, bassist Torbjörn Zetterberg and drummer Jon Fält. The group played two pieces, 30 and 20 minutes respectively, demonstrating the fragility of free music. In the first the group coalesced immediately, Silva and Anker combining like chickens fighting over seeds or wrapped in each other's textures, Sandell attentive to every nuance, bass and drums limning the detail of every peak and valley. But the second had less character and several missed endings with a flaccid fade into silence. Silva is a revelation in person, with a mature control of extended techniques. Estonian alto saxophonist/clarinetist/vocalist Maria Faust presented her *Sacrum Facere* suite, featuring another international band: Kristi Mühling (kantele, a type of dulcimer, adding a mystical component), Emanuele Maniscalco (piano), Francesco Bigoni (clarinet), Ned Ferm (tenor saxophone, clarinet), Tobias Wiklund (trumpet), Mads Hyhne (trombone) and Jonatan Ahlbom (tuba). Despite so much brass, the music was gentle, solos were part of through-composed structures, whether waltz-like, funereal, sacred or avian and Faust soloed only once but every fiber of her being was on display for each diaphanous moment.

For more information, visit tamperemusicfestivals.fi/jazz