



THE NEW YORK CITY JAZZ RECORD

THE CITY'S ONLY HOMETGROWN JAZZ GAZETTE!

IN MEMORIAM

I was first introduced to the artistry of Carol Sloane in my 20s by my dear friend and mentor Sir Richard Rodney Bennett. One afternoon when we were relaxing at his upper West Side apartment, Richard said to me "we're going to hear Carol Sloane tonight at Fat Tuesday's". It was clear to me that this was both a gift and a command by Sir Richard, who knew more about singers and the song and pretty much about all music than anyone I had ever known... but I had no idea how deeply affecting, uplifting and life-changing that night would become for me. We grabbed a cab and went downtown. There was a palpable buzz of expectation in the room. When the set began, a diminutive elegant lady walked onto the bandstand and sang with such exquisite taste, warmth, complete control of her instrument, perfect pitch and effervescence that I was filled with that magical weightless floating feeling when you experience a singular artist with that most elusive and deepest sense of extemporaneous swing. My heart was full, and each breath took the next breath away. That night was the beginning of a lifelong friendship. At Sir Richard's suggestion, Carol reached out to me to play with her at one of her next engagements. We got on like a house on fire! The chemistry was instant, and thus began a wonderful four-year period where we performed and recorded frequently. She trusted me and nurtured me musically. But it wasn't just a professional relationship. We became true friends. I often think about one of the things that Fred Rogers talked about... that is, people who loved you into being. Carol Sloane was one of those very special people in my life. She was a model of confidence coupled with humility. Her sound, always soulful and rich. Her spiritual generosity lifting. Listen to the way she sings "Deep Purple" on her debut recording with the incredible orchestral arrangement of Bill Finegan... or the deep probing lyrical nuance with which she approaches "When I Look in Your Eyes" from the first album we recorded together. The spirit of Carol Sloane will live on forever in the beautiful music she left us. I will love her and miss her forever.

—BILL CHARLAP, PIANO

I first met Carol Sloane on my first night on the job from behind the bar at The Frog & Nightgown (Raleigh, NC) in the mid-'70s. A petite, attractive woman walked in, took a barstool and said "Hi. You're new here. My name is Carol Sloane. I'm a jazz singer who performs here now and then." We remained close friends and sometime-colleagues since that night almost 50 years ago. We appeared in local musical theatre productions together and sang the closing duet of "My Ship" in a production of *Lady in the Dark*. We'd cook dinner for each other. We listened to music. We went to movies. She taught me about her life as a jazz singer—and I grew more humbled by her strength and fortitude with each passing year. In the early-'80s, she was my right hand during our time together at Stephen's, After All in Chapel Hill. Five years ago, she asked me, "Do you really think I will matter to anyone after I'm gone?" And that's why we've made the documentary, *Sloane: A Jazz Singer*. It is equally a story about resilience, about struggles of age and insecurity, about loss, hope, optimism, tenacity, respect and honoring those who've been your guideposts and laid the Artist's path for you. It's a story about what can grow from holding a transistor radio in your hands as a 12-year-old and finding, late at night in your room, music that speaks to your very soul.

—STEPHEN BAREFOOT, PRODUCER
(SLOANE: A JAZZ SINGER)

Carol Sloane was part of a generation of great music, a time there were some of the best singers of that era. Carol Sloane's name would and should be named among the finest of singers ever.

—MARY STALLINGS, VOCALS

Carol Sloane and I grew up in 'Little Rhody', no more than twenty minutes apart. We were a decade apart in age so I didn't get to see her in action until I was just out of college and starting to gig on my own. She was appearing in Providence with our other RI hero Mike Renzi. His keyboard facility and cushioning of Sloane was astonishing. Her rich yet breathy sound seemed to come from an inner resonator. Effortless yet so purposeful. Ear candy but deep down, such intelligence. It had a profound impact. I decided soon after to move to NYC. I wanted to see more live performers, learn my craft and oh, if I could be even an iota like them!

Some years later when Carol was living in NYC with Jimmy Rowles we got better acquainted. To see/hear her with Jimmy was such a different vibe but as masterful and fun. The two of them on his "Frasier (The Sensuous Lion)" is still in my head. I also got to hear her a lot at Michael's Pub. I have this cute memory of owner Gil Wiest after the gig dashing off with her in his limo. Carol's stints in Japan won her lots of ardent fans and I know a group of them from Tokyo who flew over for her special Birdland live recording with Mike Renzi and Scott Hamilton in 2019. The music that weekend was of the highest level. Carol looked and sounded beautiful. Her excitement at seeing all these fans from far and wide was palpable. Rhode Island roots run deep. I play annual homecoming concerts at Chan's Jazz & Blues Club. Carol and her sister Lois would turn up. Sloane would even join me on the bandstand. She'd never mention the key or even the song title. Just start singing and I'd perk up my ears and keep my fingers close to the keys. I'd hang around root and fifth until I got it and our Songbird Sloane carried on as she always does with her own inner resonator.

Carol Sloane was also an excellent writer. Former *DownBeat* editor Dan Morgenstern, who first heard her at the Newport Jazz Festival in 1961, had her write some reviews and features which he praised. In these last years Carol was writing essays about her career and favorite experiences...even the Red Sox. I was thrilled that she agreed to write liner notes for my most recent album. Her astute thought waves inspired a comparison of me to Gertrude Lawrence. Some friends exclaimed "Gertie was a great actress—but she couldn't sing!" I loved calling Sloane after that and saying "this is Gertie". It always got a laugh.

—DARYL SHERMAN, VOCALS

I had the good fortune to hear Carol Sloane live on two occasions. The first was at Bill Charlapp's 2006 Jazz in July at 92nd Street Y and more recently at Winter's Jazz Club Chicago in June 2019. Of course, I had loved her recordings, but hearing her live was a Master Class. My most vivid memory of both performances was how she could sustain an almost achingly glacial tempo on a ballad and make it the most engaging story you ever heard. You leaned in to catch every word and emotion. Talk about less is more. The crowds at both concerts were completely in her pocket. She was so gracious to me after the Winter's concert. I was honored she had ever heard my recordings. Thank you, Carol. Your music will live on.

—LIBBY YORK, VOCALS

Carol Sloane was a beautiful person with an open heart. There was no separation between the singer and the song: they were one. Listening to Carol Sloane's recordings is a Master Class in phrasing, swing and blues, and just inventing in the moment. It's been an honor and a privilege to have known Carol, and I've learned (and continue to learn) so much from her artistry. She embraced me like family from the first time we met, and I will always cherish that. Thank you, Carol, for enriching my life.

—CATHERINE RUSSELL, VOCALS

Carol Sloane embodied all those rare qualities that a true jazz singer possesses. First of all, she had a gorgeous, warm and naturally resounding voice, pitch-perfect phrasing, impeccable timing and—most significantly—a precise delivery with absolutely no trace of affectation. Everything about her singing sounded true, simple and natural. And as it always happens with true artistry, the truthfulness and simplicity of her singing was another facet of her personality: warm, witty, loving and humble. No screaming, no need to pump up the volume or the dramatics. Carol did not need to do that in order to make us feel the profound beauty of a melody, and to make us cry or rejoice at the stories she would tell in song. The many Masters that she collaborated with loved her deeply. So did we, her listeners and fans.

I grew up listening to her albums and, after I moved to the U.S., I had the good chance of listening to some of her amazing live concerts in NYC. I had the blessing of knowing her in person and getting to spend time with her on a number of occasions. She was so gracious and kind to me, and I will treasure those moments filled with joy and laughter. She maintained an openness and curiosity about musicians throughout her life, and I can't forget the thrill when she came to hear me at Scullers in Boston where I was with my quartet as well as at Tanglewood, where I was singing with one of her many collaborators and friends, Master Hank Jones. I was struck at the love of music that emanated from her, like a fire that burned within her and nothing could extinguish. I know that this was what she always lived for. A documentary is now being released about this extraordinary artist, and I look forward to watching it. I am sure that many more people will have the chance to fall in love with her voice, just as I did.

We all wish she could have enjoyed more recognition and more awards for her stellar career while she was still among us. But Carol Sloane, Master of the voice, lived for and through music, and through music her voice will live on. She lived, as Master Kenny Dorham used to say, "with music in mind" (and in heart, body and soul). Thank you from the bottom of my heart, dear Carol.

—ROBERTA GAMBARINI, VOCALS

Carol Sloane was one of the great singers and storytellers. I regret I hardly knew her but I admired her honest delivery. And that's not a "sideways compliment"—I do love that about musicians when that happens. Thankfully, she left the world a wonderful legacy of recordings.

—KARRIN ALLYSON, VOCALS

So upsetting when voices are stilled, especially beautiful voices like Carol Sloane's. Our first albums came out around the same time. We were friendly but never close, but we had so many friends in common and shared all those years in the music world together. It feels like a personal loss. In recent years the musicians I worked with closely have been disappearing in alarming numbers. As the song says, the fundamental things apply *As Time Goes By*.

—NANCY HARROW, VOCALS

The sad news of Carol Sloane's passing stirred up a lot of memories for me. She was a unique vocalist who leaves us with a wonderful, recorded legacy. Anyone fortunate enough to have heard her live will recall the darker, rich quality of her voice and her easy swinging style. Those of us who were fortunate enough to have worked with her will remember all of the above along with a warm personality and sense of humor. Even though we had lost contact when I moved out West, I was so gratified to see that the final stages of her career were by far the most productive and personally rewarding for her and her audience. R.I.P. Carol.

—JOE LABARBERA, DRUMS



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The first time I heard Carol Sloane, I was smitten. I heard what anyone else with discerning ears heard – her perfect intonation, velvety voice, impeccable taste and her ability to master any song in any style and at any tempo. She could make the listener feel as if she were singing directly to and for them. I was very fortunate to also become her friend. We had a great appreciation for our shared sense of humor. In addition to all of Sloane's talents, which included pie baking, she was smart, articulate and possessed a dry and sharp wit. Sloane called one day and insisted that I get involved with a group called "Songbirds". I joined and it afforded me the opportunity to share special and intimate time with her, traveling and living as roommates. Of course, I as a singer benefitted from the guidance that she so generously offered me, but my favorite memories will be of the times that we spent together as two girlfriends or – as she referred to us as – "sisters"!

– DONNA BYRNE, VOCALS

I was lucky to play with Carol for 10 years through the '90s into 2002 or so. The first time I worked with her I was blown away by her great intonation and her hard swinging feel. But for me she was at her best singing a ballad. The way she delivered the lyric, personal, intense and with feeling; hard to find in a singer these days! Working with her, Bill Charlap and Michael Moore was an honor and one hell of a musical experience. She will be missed!

– RON VINCENT, DRUMS

Carol Sloane was simply one of the most honest, soulful, funny and swinging individuals I've ever met. Every encounter we had was magical – she was a great storyteller on and off the bandstand and kept her marvelously skewed view on life throughout much heartache and tragedy, and remained absolutely creative up until the end. I remember doing a trio record with her where she said to me, "You're going to sing a duet with me on the next song", that next song being "Just Squeeze Me (But Please Don't Tease Me)". I looked at her aghast and said "I don't know the words" and she stared at me like the idiot I was and said, "Well, lucky for you I have a copy right here." She then counted it off and one take later we had – if I say so myself – quite a charming and fun version in the can. And that was Carol: full of surprises, witty, great intellect, sharp as a tack and every song she sang reflected all of those qualities and a lot more. When she sang a song she meant it on every level – emotionally, intellectually, etc. She couldn't wait to share her joy of singing, and also did not suffer fools gladly. I greatly admired her and now, sadly, greatly miss her. She was inspiring in so many ways.

– KEN PEPOWSKI, CLARINET/TENOR SAX

Carol was always a presence in the Boston scene, and the vocal world, representing the epitome of sublime phrasing and lyric expression. Sometime in the mid-'80s, I went to hear her perform at the Starlight Roof in Kenmore Square in Boston, which was a lovely, intimate club. Carol's husband, Buck Spurr, booked the venue, and I had worked there a time or two with Ran Blake and Ricky Ford. That night, Carol was performing in a trio with guitarist Gene Bertoncini and bassist Michael Moore. I was transfixed from the first note. To say it was understated would be an understatement. Each musician played so minimally, yet the groove was deep and the music almost unbearably expressive. It was a perfect trio, something very special. Later, in the mid-'90s, I was grateful that she was willing to sub for me at New England Conservatory for a semester while I was on maternity leave. I was so glad for my students to have the unique opportunity to experience the depth of Carol's unparalleled interpretations.

– DOMINIQUE EADE, VOCALS

I loved playing bass for Carol. She was such a fine musician and interpreter of song. And she was great to work for. I am so sorry she is no longer with us.

– JAY LEONHART, BASS

I have long admired Carol's vocal skills and tone and her approach. We've lost a great talent.

– REBECCA KILGORE, VOCALS

I was a shy introvert, a student at Berklee College of Music still finding my voice. It was the late-'80s and Carol was performing regularly at Boston's jazz venues. She was beloved. She also hosted a radio program that aired on WGBH. I don't know how she found my demos, but she did. These were my first-ever recordings, live to half-inch-tape – standards like "Never Will I Marry", "Chega de Saudade" and "You've Changed". It was the first time in my life that anyone, besides my teachers, had championed me. She played me on her radio show. She was giving, kind, nurturing, precisely when I needed sunlight.

I don't think she ever knew how much that meant to me, being seen and supported by her. It is an oft-neglected responsibility of elders to nurture next-generations. Carol sought me out, lifted me up. She had a loving heart and made a difference in my life.

– PAULA COLE, VOCALS



CAROL
SLOANE
1937-2023

PHOTO BY ALAN NAUGHTAN