

Patty Cronheim

By Joe Patitucci

“If you only create art to achieve some kind of recognition or ego gratification, you will never be satisfied. The goals will just keep getting higher and higher. They real joy is in loving what you do. Listening at each step along the way to what makes your heart and voice sing...”

Jl: What inspired you to pursue a career in jazz?

PC: I grew up listening to a healthy dose of jazz and blues. I remember my parents taking me to hear Sarah Vaughn in one of her last concerts and being transported by her voice as she sang an entire concert of Gershwin. (That’s probably why I put “Summertime” on *Day’s Like These*.) I loved listening to all the great female jazz singers – Ella, Billy, Shirley. Their spirits shone through the music. Once I began to appreciate the gorgeously soaring complexity of jazz, I was certain it was the music I wanted to be a part of. There’s nothing like being on stage and absorbing those glorious jazz sounds. And, there’s nothing quite like hearing a

song you wrote played live for the first time by wonderful jazz musicians. Talk about joy! It’s quite the rush.

Jl: What kinds of eye-opening lessons or understandings about human nature have you gained through your experiences in the music business?

PC: It’s all about relationships. Good things happen through forming friendships with people. Maybe I’ve just been lucky, but all of the musicians and industry folks I’ve worked with over the years have been real sweethearts. I’ve heard horror stories about people getting cheated and musicians flaking out, but that simply has not been my experience. One of the best parts of making *Days Like These* has been getting to work with my wonderful musicians, designers, and promotion guys. Every step of the way there were



people who helped and were enthusiastic about my project. The term “solo artist” is really such a misnomer. There are SO MANY talented people involved in making music and getting it out to the public! As I said, it’s all about relationships.

Jl: What are the benefits and drawbacks of women segregating themselves into all-women groups and endeavors?

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www.pattycronheim.com

Brenda Earle

By Gary Heimbauer

“The biggest challenges that women face are the same that everyone faces in the jazz world. There are fewer and fewer venues ... It can be very discouraging to keep plodding away in an industry where you have to fight for months to get a gig at a venue that pays the band \$150. I feel like the jazz scene breeds existential crisis, whether you’re a woman or a man.”

Jl: What inspired you to pursue a career in jazz?

BE: I was taking a jazz appreciating class in high school and my teacher played a recording of Oscar Peterson playing “C Jam Blues” and I thought “this is it”. It was an immediate solution to my music situation. I loved playing music, but I didn’t like the process of classical study. Jazz made complete sense to me.

BE: I would never use the word segregation, since by definition it implies discrimination. My experiences with the DIVA Jazz Orchestra and the (now-defunct) Sister’s in Jazz competition have been inspiring and musically fulfilling. The fact that we were all of the same gender made for a certain level of understanding and experience, but the music and our pursuit of it was the more profound undercurrent.

Jl: What are the benefits and drawbacks of women segregating themselves into all-women groups and endeavors?

Jl: What kinds of interests or activities do you pursue in addition to music? If applicable, how do they contribute to your awareness and development as an artist?

BE: I am active in the choral community as a com-



poser, arranger and conductor. I am an avid reader of fiction and non fiction and I love movies. My fiancé and I are starting to work on a lot of fun home improvement projects. I feel like I am now at the stage of my life where everything doesn’t have to contribute to my awareness and development as an artist. When I was younger, I lived and died for music and it was the only focus in my life. After all these years of hard work and sacrifice, I am finally giving myself permis-

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people. In only a very few rare instances have I encountered people with whom I won't work again. Those are the people who continually see the glass half-empty, who are supremely jealous of others' success and are a drain on one's energy.

JJ: What are the benefits and drawbacks of women segregating themselves into all-women groups and endeavors?

AB: The benefit is that these sorts of things can draw more attention to the women and groups involved. If it helps the musicians to develop their audiences, I'm all for it. However, I worry that by focusing on "women in jazz," it can risk marginalizing the music and there's no reason for that. There are so many incredibly talented women in jazz — folks like Maria Schneider, Leslie Pintchik, Ingrid Jensen, Satoko Fujii, Amina Figarova, Sumi Tonooka and lots of others — whose music stands on its own merit. These women are making powerful musical statements and have their business acts together, as well. Just look at how Maria Schneider has opened up her process through ArtistShare. Not only is she able to fund ever more ambitious projects, she is a game changer, winning the first Grammy award for a CD without in-store distribution. And Satoko Fujii

is a force of nature unto herself, sometimes releasing 4 CDs at once, all different, all creative, in a variety of different band configurations. She has built an amazing career over time. These women work as hard as any man and they're recognized for their efforts.

JJ: What are the biggest challenges that women face in the jazz world? What suggestions do you have for overcoming those challenges, toward developing a grander unity in this often competitive artistic arena?

AB: Personally, I've never felt held back because I was a woman so I don't look at the world in that way. But I do know these barriers exist and are very real for many women. I think women should forge ahead and not take no for an answer. Have clear goals, go after them and network as much as possible. Don't see the world as an either/or place. If one person is hugely successful in the jazz world, that helps pave the way for others to be successful as well.

JJ: Could you share some words of wisdom, or a quotation or idea that you've discovered, read or learned through experience that embodies the kind of character, integrity and ethics to which you aspire?

AB: The golden rule — I tell this to my son all the

time: "Do unto others what you would like others to do unto you."

JJ: Could you comment or offer advice on the importance of developing relevant business acumen?

AB: These days it's important for all musicians to develop some business skills, since most folks aren't lucky enough to have a label pay them well and take care of all the business of music. It's really important for musicians to find ways to reach their fans and keep a dialog with them. The internet is a great way to do that, and I love the ArtistShare model for helping musicians connect with their audience. I also think that ongoing advertising in magazines such as *Jazz Inside* is another good way to reach a wider audience. Many musicians don't see the onset of their career as if they're starting a business — and that's really what it is.

JJ: John Ruskin said: "The highest reward for a person's toil is not what they get for it, but what they become by it." Could you comment on how this might be relevant in your own life and artistry?

AB: That's a very nice quote, Eric. I think this is the core of what we have been talking about this whole interview, that we become more wholly ourselves when we work at something we're passionate about. ■

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of what's going on around me. We are all the central characters of our own movie. How we react, drink in our life experiences and integrate them into our world is what keeps the movie so exciting.

JJ: What kinds of interests or activities do you pursue in addition to music? If applicable, how do they contribute to your awareness and development as an artist?

RC: I practice yoga and meditation on a daily basis. It helps clear my mind, and gives me a direct line to the creative part of my brain -- the part that comes up with original music and lyrics! It tremendously aids my ability to focus and keeps me in touch with my innermost intentions.

JJ: What are the biggest challenges that women face in the jazz world? What suggestions do you have for overcoming those challenges, toward developing a grander unity in this often competitive artistic arena?

RC: Working with my fellow women jazz musicians, especially Lynne Arriale and Kate McGarry, is some-

thing I really enjoy. I've had some of the most gratifying musical experiences ever with them. There is an extra layer of sensitivity and support there that allows me to take risks and try things that I might not otherwise have had the nerve to try! I recently featured Mayra Cassales on percussion in my upcoming Motema release, *Who Knows Where the Time Goes*. Her amazing energy lit up the whole band and the entire session.

JJ: Could you share some words of wisdom, or a quotation or idea that you've discovered, read or learned through experience that embodies the kind of character, integrity and ethics to which you aspire?

RC: "Be the source — not the result" — Rumi. I go back to this quote time and time again. It is a fundamental guideline for me — in writing, performing, improvising and living. It goes back to having pure intentions in thoughts, words and actions — in trusting and developing the roots of my own personal instincts without anticipating results. It is the best way to stay authentic, original and true to myself. It informs my character and supports my integrity in everything I do.

JJ: What kinds of practice, studies or other activities

do you currently engage in to stay fresh, develop your skills, broaden your awareness, and constantly grow?

RC: I am constantly looking for ways to improve and expand my knowledge! I'm a voracious reader -- of history, philosophy, poetry, science, you name it. They all feed in to my work. I wrote "Telescope" after reading "The Elegant Universe" by Brian Greene. I'm also currently taking jazz piano lessons — and having an absolute blast practicing every day!

JJ: John Ruskin said "The highest reward for a person's toil is not what they get for it, but what they become by it." Could you comment on how this might be relevant in your own life?

RC: If your goal in life is to become more fully human through your art — whether it is writing, painting, composing, sculpting... — then you know that the only way to achieve that goal is through applying yourself. It doesn't happen without great effort and concentration. You learn that each act of creation spurs growth. You may take baby steps at first, but eventually if you stick with it, you'll become a more complete artist and human being, capable of greater compassion, insight, patience, humor, and most of all, love and joy! ■

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PC: Personally, I like the balance of men and women playing together.

JJ: What kinds of interests or activities do you pursue in addition to music? If applicable, how do they

contribute to your awareness and development as an artist?

PC: I choose to do things that help me be in the moment. I love outdoor activities and challenging myself physically. I've always loved swimming in the

ocean, and last week I entered a body surfing competition for the first time. I was the only woman in the competition, and even with the 10-foot waves, I kept reminding myself to be brave so I wouldn't embarrass myself. I am a voracious reader and love a good

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novel. I have African drums in my living room and play them. Babatundi Olatunji was a dear friend and I had the opportunity to study drumming and dance with him. Of course, I'm a mom... that informs everything. I like to be active and challenged and play. I find the joy in playing is key to feeling alive.

JJ: Could you share some words of wisdom, or a quotation or idea that you've discovered, read or learned through experience that embodies the kind of character, integrity and ethics to which you aspire?

PC: Wow! That's a big question. I think my biggest truth is that I need to act from a place of joy. If I'm not writing or performing, things get a little flat for

me. I'm so grateful I have something as powerful as music in my life and I try to remember and honor that. Music is all about love and if you get jaded it loses its heart. I love working with musicians who say things like "can you believe we get paid doing what we love so much!" That's really the bottom line... love, passion, and gratitude.

JJ: Could you comment or offer advice on the importance of developing relevant business acumen?

PC: Music is like any other business. You have to be informed and educated. Knowledge is freedom. It's a very exciting time to be an indie artist and the opportunities keep evolving!

JJ: John Ruskin said: "The highest reward for a per-

son's toil is not what they get for it, but what they become by it." Could you comment on how this might be relevant in your own life and artistry?

PC: He also said "good art is done with enjoyment." If you only create art to achieve some kind of recognition or ego gratification, you will never be satisfied. The goals will just keep getting higher and higher. They real joy is in loving what you do. Listening at each step along the way to what makes your heart and voice sing and avoiding choices just because they're what you think you "should" be doing. I have no idea where my career will take me. *Days Like These* is my first CD and for all I know my second may be radically different. It's kind of exciting. I do know that everything I do teaches me something and it's been an amazing journey. ■

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sion to take time off to do things that are fun and challenging in a different way. When I can step away from music, I find myself living a more balanced life, which makes everything a lot more enjoyable.

JJ: What are the biggest challenges that women face in the jazz world? What suggestions do you have for overcoming those challenges, toward developing a grander unity in this often competitive artistic arena?

BE: The biggest challenges that women face are the same that everyone faces in the jazz world. There are fewer and fewer venues. Many venues pay very little, or expect you to bring out all your friends so that they can take a cut of the cover charge. It can be very discouraging to keep plodding away in an industry where you have to fight for months to get a gig at a venue that pays the band \$150. I feel like the jazz scene breeds existential crisis, whether you're a woman or a man.

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have found it incredibly unifying and uplifting as artists and women to have this long-standing partnership. I think we all struggle to be taken seriously. My philosophy is to strive towards being a master of my craft. I think to survive, you've got to stay interested and creative and have your goals center around that rather than where you fall on the JazzWeek Chart. Alan Toussaint said, "It's a loveable situation." We're not just competing...we're *contributing*.

JJ: Could you share some words of wisdom, or a quotation or idea that you've discovered, read or learned through experience that embodies the kind of character, integrity and ethics to which you aspire?

ME: "Life shrinks or expands in proportion to one's courage" – Anais Nin.

JJ: Could you comment or offer advice on the importance of developing relevant business acumen?

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BE: The jazz industry is often a strange business model. What other businesses do we know where someone would pay out of pocket to make a recording or play a show that won't end up paying anything on the investment? Everyone should know how to create and update a website, send out periodic newsletters, listen to their instincts with regards to promoters, agents, managers, labels and find something fulfilling to do that actually pays money. If you have a stable source of income from teaching, web design, etc. then having a long career as a jazz musician won't burn you out.

JJ: John Ruskin said: "The highest reward for a person's toil is not what they get for it, but what they become by it." Could you comment on how this might be relevant in your own life and artistry?

BE: I am a process-oriented person, rather than a

product-oriented person. The success for me lies in the daily effort, the new challenges I take on and the ways I stretch myself, not from the reviews, finished product or a sold-out concert. Whenever I complete a task, like a CD or a new composition, I am already thinking about the next one. I find a lot of pleasure in learning and growing.

JJ: Is there anything about women's current and future roles and accomplishments in jazz, or your own ideas and endeavors that I haven't prompted you about that you would like to discuss?

BE: I teach a lot of students of every age and I really believe that music is a pursuit that is available for everyone to enjoy. Talent is relative to the number of hours one spends on their work. I encourage all of my students to be their best and to remain open to what life has to offer them – men and women. I always joke with my singers that they need to get these skills together so they "don't have to marry a piano player." ■

ME: There is no denying the importance of understanding how our business operates. Information is power. The more you know the better off you are. Unfortunately, it can be massively overwhelming and discouraging to comprehend all you need to do to get your music into the world. The good news is that marketing can be a fun challenge. Project You! Women are natural organizers; so much information is at our fingertips...and a lot of it is free! My advice is to become informed about the basics of marketing yourself as an *artist*. Make a brief list of achievable goals. Hire a friend to help you. Spread the good word about your music. Invest in yourself. But do it in the right order...music, then marketing.

JJ: What kinds of practice, studies or other activities do you currently engage in to stay fresh, develop your skills, broaden your awareness, and constantly grow?

ME: I try to learn something new every day. I have finally learned that EVERYTHING you do informs

your music (and your life). *Nothing* is a waste of time. I stay über-curious. I consciously keep my eyes and heart open to everything around me. I read. I interact. I study. I practice. I host poetry reading parties at my home. I belong to a couple of goofy clubs: "The Bonne Fourchette Society" (a far-from-highfalutin cooking group) and "Amici Della Opera Italiano (neighbors meeting on our rooftop overlooking San Francisco Bay to drink good wine and tell bad jokes!)

JJ: John Ruskin said "The highest reward for a person's toil is not what they get for it, but what they become by it." Could you comment on how this might be relevant in your own life?

ME: Amen. It takes a lot of *life* to grasp that concept. Patience. Forgiveness. Fortitude. Conscious living. A magnanimous open heart towards others AND yourself. Living life with that kind of credo is essential in achieving the open receptiveness you need to really "make" music with other people. ■