

Cheryl Hodge

By Eric Nemeyer

With over 20 years of playing & touring with some of the finest jazz musicians in the U.S. & Canada, Hodge is a gifted pianist and isn't afraid to visit the outer stretches of "scatting" territory. Her first love, however remains (and most likely forever will be...) composing. Hodge has performed alongside: John Stowell, Mike Stern, Dan Balmer, Hugh Fraser, Dee Daniels, & countless others. Hodge has also been known to diverge into film scores, and musical direction. Hodge graduated with a degree from Berklee College of Music, in Boston where she taught music for 8 years. Students have included: Paula Cole (top ten, pop), Frazee Ford (of The Be Good, Tanyas) and Kyle Gordon (famous studio vocalist). Since then, she has recorded her vocals on several labels; including Warner Brothers and Atco Records (The Raindogs first release, 1990). She now heads up the Vocal Dept. at Selkirk College, in the cozy artistic mecca known as Nelson, B.C., Canada. There she also teaches Songwriting, Arranging, and Business of Music.

JJ: Hi Cheryl, We are big Coast to Coast AM fans here at Jazz Inside, so I wanted to ask you how you were fortunate enough to have your music featured

on there, and whether or not you got to speak on the show? If so, what was the experience like?

CH: You're fans as well? Ha! I knew there were some other hidden reasons I liked you guys, besides the fact that you have amazing issues coming out every month! Anyone can submit their music to George Noory at the Coast to Coast AM website: <http://www.coasttocoastam.com>. George Noory loves helping "up and comers" in the music biz. They wade through several thousand a month, so if you are one of the "chosen" ones to be Artist of the Month, consider yourself



"My biggest fear was that when I got older the creativity would stop. Luckily, it is just the opposite. The ideas keep comin' and flowin' so fast that I sometimes cannot get it down on paper quick enough. And now, I'm going to get all metaphysical on you, so you can either choose to print this part, or not; but I feel very strongly that at times I've had visitations from the spirits of Monk, Miles, and Bill Evans. Crazy, right?"

lucky. I know I do! I wasn't even told they chose me; I was listening to the show and lo and behold, on came my song, "That's Why I'm Here". I thought I had accidentally touched play on one of my songs; then discovered it was being played on the show! It's a song about God, and trusting that there's a reason why we're all here on the planet. I was shocked that I was chosen, frankly. I've been a fan for 18 years, since the Art Bell days. Back then, great musicians kept telling me to get into the late night radio show; they said when a musician drives home late at night from a gig, it keeps them from going asleep at the wheel. They were right! Now I'm hooked... completely.

JJ: Can you give us a quick summary of what people can learn by using your Book w/ Companion CD, "A Singer's Guide to the Well Trained and Powerful Voice"?

CH: My goal when I wrote this book was to provide a very comprehensive book about singing; not just exercises; or how to focus on trouble spots; but MORE; like, how to protect your pipes; and a little about the science behind the vocal folds. In the end, though, it's all about keeping singing more on the physical plane than the mental plane. Most people sing with their imagination, instead of with their body.

JJ: For a while, I thought that vocal lessons would

take the intuition and individuality out of my approach to singing, because it seemed like people I knew who were trained had a very affected use of vibrato and a manufactured tone. But now, as I'm getting more into singing, I know that I need someone to tell me how to control my breath and I realize that I can benefit from personal instruction. How do you teach people how to sing, without taking some of their individuality out of their approach?

CH: That is one great question—you said a mouthful! When I go about teaching I approach each person from their individual strengths first. Questions arise like: What made you choose to be a singer? And, what do you feel your greatest strengths are? By identifying the strengths first, I am able to help them retain their individuality. I often will effectively help them eliminate the weaknesses by injecting more of what they already do correctly, and beautifully into the "trouble spots". Think of "cutting and pasting"; that would be the cyber analogy. Of course, most singers desire rich tone, which can ONLY be gained through posture, breath connection, and projection from the diaphragm; but up the back of the throat; never up the front; which will thrash those delicate vocal folds.

JJ: What is behind your obsession with music, if I can call it that? Can you articulate what it is about singing/playing this music that continues to inspire and motivate you day after day and year after year?

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