

# Mother of Pearl

jazz



**Mother of Pearl** is Vancouver's all female jazz and blues quartet. Each of its members is an accomplished artist in her own right, pursuing diverse musical careers including music therapy, operatic percussion, piano teaching and being a studio musician. Between them they have decades of performing experience in an encyclopedic array of ensembles and genres. In 1996 a Vancouver women's arts festival brought them together to play what was intended to be a one-time concert of jazz performed by women. Like many one night stands, it was so much fun that almost a decade later they are still at it. Today pianist Brenda Baird; bassist Wendy Solloway; drummer Lauri Lyster and saxophonist/flutist and vocalist, Karen Graves are an integral and active part of Vancouver's burgeoning jazz milieu.

Mother of Pearl has learned the secret of jazz survival—don't just do one thing! They'll play a concert, a club or a wedding. They've visited hundreds of classrooms from Haida Gwaii to Castlegar, earning them "schools" of fans. Jazz festivals from Halifax to Whitehorse have welcomed them with open ears. Radio audiences from The Vinyl Café to Hot Air to Sounds Like Canada have heard them perform and discuss their music. Even flyers on Air Canada have heard them on the in-flight entertainment. With two CDs to their credit, they are slowly but inexorably building a national following for their work.

Mother of Pearl casts a wide net for their repertoire. There are "standards" from the golden age of jazz and blues, tunes and songs they have composed and funky gems drawn from the contemporary jazz revival. Through it all runs a commitment to playing great

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music and also to playing music written and performed by women. From the International Sweethearts of Rhythm, circa 1945, to the work of Carla Bley, circa now, Mother of Pearl has always paid tribute to their foremothers. In 2000, they began the research that would lead to *sheBOP! A Century of Jazz Compositions by Canadian Women*.

*sheBOP!* is a cohesive presentation combining music, slides and narrative to tell the story of jazz written by Canadian women from the Ragtime of Montreal's Vera Guilaroff to the world jazz of Vancouver's Kathy Kidd. It poses and answers the riddle—"Who wrote Frank Sinatra's first big hit? Who wrote the first Canadian song to sell a million copies? Who wrote Canada's unofficial national anthem, *Hockey Night in Canada*? Canadian jazz women, that's who! Covering a dozen genres of jazz, *sheBOP!* is a revelation and has introduced Canadian women's jazz history to audiences from Quadra Island to Toronto.

As they approach their tenth anniversary Mother of Pearl can look back at many accomplishments and look forward to new creative challenges—"We continue to develop the concept which originally inspired us to form the ensemble—to build the visibility of women as creators and performers of jazz".

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## sheBOP! A Century of Jazz Compositions by Canadian Women

Mother of Pearl is an all-women jazz quartet from Vancouver. For almost ten years we have performed a wide variety of jazz music to audiences from coast to coast. In September of 2001 we premiered a new show—sheBOP! After years of research, Mother of Pearl is dedicated to telling the story of Canadian women jazz composers. Truly a revelation, it is a seamless presentation that combines music and slides interspersed with lively, fact-filled narration while tracing the history of Canadian jazz written by women through the twentieth century. Its first performance was greeted with a prolonged standing ovation at a packed Vancouver East Cultural Centre. Since then it has received wild acclaim wherever it has been presented, from Toronto's Harbourfront Centre to Thompson, Manitoba to Quadra Island, BC. We believe sheBOP! is wonderfully unique, and a breakthrough for the story of jazz in Canada

Some of the composers featured in sheBOP! are well known, others are obscure. Several of the tunes and songs are known world wide, but who knew that they were written by Canadians, and Canadian women at that?

The show begins with a song by the earliest artist Mother of Pearl could find—Montrealer Vera Guilaroff. While remembered by jazz aficionados as a piano dynamo (several of her instrumental covers are on CD piano anthologies), Vera's own songs were never recorded and only through our uncovering a piece of long lost sheet music were we able to learn one. We heard a jazzy swing sensibility in La Bolduc, another Québécoise and perhaps Canada's first female "superstar". We celebrate this in our treatment of *Les Policemen*.

Toronto songwriter, Ruth Lowe's *I'll Never Smile Again* is well known, as is *Bluebird On Your Windowsill* written by Vancouver nurse, Elizabeth Clarke. Their inclusion is both a presentation of the jazz influenced "pop" music of the period and recognition of the success of these tunes. The first is an enduring jazz standard, the second, a landmark as the first Canadian song to sell over a million copies.

From the 40's we discovered Hootin' Lil Marcus, active in the Toronto left-wing folk scene. We combined her *Train of Progress* and *Union Man* into a medley that represents a particular genre of postwar song writing that joins jazz and cabaret with a socially conscious lyric.

The sixties and seventies saw more women performing and writing jazz. Vancouver's Dolores Claman was a natural to include in sheBOP! given the anthem-like esteem in which *Hockey Night In Canada* is held. Torontonians, Kathryn Moses and Jane Fair stood out for us as two of the finest composers of the 70's. The inclusion of a Joni Mitchell song from what could be called her "jazz period" was a logical addition, and Downchild Blues Band pianist Jane Vasey's rollicking blues tinged boogie, *Tryin' To Keep Her 88's Straight* captured our hearts, ears, and feet!

There are now so many outstanding women jazz composers in Canada that it seems we have gone from famine to feast. We chose Karen Young because of the important role she has played and while she is best known as a vocalist, she is also a great, innovative composer. We play tribute to our good friend Kathy Kidd who was an important influence on jazz musicians in Mother of Pearl's hometown, Vancouver. She blazed new trails by incorporating world music into her writing.

sheBOP! has worked well in open air festival settings, in clubs, and, naturally, as a full concert presentation. In its concert format sheBOP! is presented with a program full of information about the composers, as well as a slide show that visually documents the history behind the music we are playing. Mother of Pearl has had great success performing sheBOP! in various formations; the core quartet is enhanced with the addition of either a guest singer or horn player. On some occasions a full horn section has been added, on others a percussionist; once in a while an entire choir. sheBOP! can incorporate many guests—what remains constant is the repertoire and commitment to sharing the story of jazz women in Canada.

If you want to present something delightfully different to your audience, get in touch to find out more or make a booking.

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## What They're Saying About Mother of Pearl

"Mother of Pearl was one of the most eclectic, stylish and entertaining groups in the festival . . . the group played and sang their hearts out to the delight of the spellbound audience. This find was quite a treasure."

*Harry Currie, The Kitchener Record*

"a serious jazz unit"

*Alex Varty, Georgia Straight*

"Everyone sounded great and the repertoire was very, very good. I'm already getting requests for a return performance for Mother of Pearl on the main stage."

*Jacques Edmond, Programming Director Ottawa International Jazz Festival*

"Bravo for Mother of Pearl's extraordinary performance"

*Centrum Arts and Education Director*

"Mother of Pearl personifies everything that makes the west coast jazz scene so vibrant - great chops, intelligent writing and people who deserve every success they earn."

*Paul Grant, "Hot Air" CBC Radio*

"Your performance was delightful!"

*Jim McGillvray, Artistic Director Pender Harbour Jazz Festival*

"I first heard this band at a festival in Canada and I was impressed with their outstanding musicianship - so much so that I hired them for my own festival in Port Townsend. A great band!"

*Bud Shank, jazz musician, Artistic Director Port Townsend Jazz Festival*

"Sassy and classy, Mother of Pearl has a fresh, bright sound combined with an appealing performance energy. They had to have an encore performance at our annual festival."

*Jim Holland, Director Kaslo Jazz Etc. Society*



"As more women enter the field of jazz, we may see more all female bands like Mother of Pearl. Here's hoping."

*Mark Andrews, Vancouver Sun*

"The audience loved it. Watch for them."

*Rene Derouyter, The Vancouver Province*

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## What They're Saying About sheBOP!



"The response from those who attended was tremendous . . . great band and a great presentation."  
*Brent Campbell, Brandon Jazz Festival*

\*\*\*\* (Wonderful) a warm and spirited CD . . . The ballads are sung with stylish charm and warmth, and the up-tempo numbers bounce along in mainly bopish arrangements.  
*Montreal Gazette*

"A labour of love covering most of jazz's bases, from swing, Latin and bebop through fusion and blues"  
*Kitchener-Waterloo Record*

"SheBOP is illuminating and great fun"  
*Victoria Times-Colonist*

"these players are really paying service to the composers and tunes in their original historical light, not for their subsequent pop-culture associations"  
*The Edmonton Journal*

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## MOTHER OF PEARL SELECTED PERFORMANCES

Kaslo Jazz Festival  
Filberg Festival, Vancouver Island  
Ottawa Jazz Festival  
Harrison Festival of the Arts  
Jazz on the Wing, Whitehorse, Yukon  
Gibsons Jazz Festival  
Pender Harbour Jazz Festival  
Vancouver International Jazz Festival  
Atlantic Jazz Festival, Halifax  
Montreal Jazz Festival  
Waterloo Jazz Festival  
San Juan Festival of the Arts, WA  
Hornby Island Festival of the Arts, BC  
Port Townsend Jazz Festival, WA

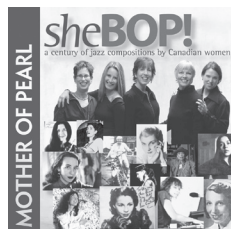


## sheBOP!

Vancouver East Cultural Centre  
Charles Bailey Theatre, Trail, BC  
Artspring Theatre, Saltspring Is., BC  
Lyle Victor Albert Centre, Bonnyville, AB  
Eagles Nest Theatre, Squamish, BC  
Harbourfront Centre, Toronto, ON  
Osoyoos Secondary School Theatre, Osoyoos BC  
Community Centre, Quadra Island BC  
Qualicum Beach Civic Centre, Qualicum Beach BC  
Capilano College Theatre, North Vancouver  
Ironwood Stage and Grill, Calgary AB  
The Bassment, Saskatoon SK  
Academy Coffee Company, Winnipeg  
SRSS Theatre, Steinbach MB  
Arts Centre, Thompson MB  
Brandon Jazz Festival, Brandon MB  
William Glesby Centre, Portage La Prairie MB  
Killarney Collegiate, Killarney MB



And Many More . . . Mother of Pearl has made a number of live broadcasts for CBC Radio including Vinyl Café, This Morning, Hot Air and Live From Studio One. They have performed innumerable club dates and school shows.



## Discography

*Mother of Pearl*  
*sheBOP! A Century of Jazz Compositions by Canadian Women*  
both available from Festival Distribution  
([www.festival.bc.ca](http://www.festival.bc.ca) 1-800-633-8282)  
or Mother of Pearl.

# Mother of Pearl

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## sheBOP! A century of jazz compositions by Canadian women set one

### **(There's a) Bluebird On Your Windowsill** Elizabeth Clarke, 1947

Elizabeth Clarke was not a songwriter and had no intention of making music history when she went to work at Vancouver Children's Hospital one day in 1947. During her shift, a sparrow happened to land on the windowsill and a young boy became very excited by this occurrence. Clarke, a nurse, was also a creative soul who liked to read stories and poems to her young charges. She transformed the sparrow into a bluebird and the tale of its arrival into a song.

*There's a Bluebird on Your Windowsill* found its way to Al Reusch, one of Vancouver and Canada's recording pioneers. Impressed by the optimism and emotion of the song, Reusch gave it to local artist, Don Murphy to record. Shortly after, the popular Vancouver group The Rhythm Pals, cut a version that became a regional hit. The song found its way to Doris Day and then to Bing Crosby and dozens of others. It became the first Canadian-written song to sell a million copies. True to the ethos of the song, Clarke gave every penny of her royalties to the hospital.

### **If You Only Knew** Vera Guilaroff, 1921

Born in London, England in 1902, Vera Guilaroff moved to Montréal when she was a young girl. She studied piano with her sister Olga, who became a renowned teacher, and at the age of 14 began her own career accompanying silent films at the Regent Theatre. Vera studied music at the McGill Conservatory, and collaborated with Willie Eckstein, the Montréal-born ragtime piano star.

Best known as an interpreter, Vera also composed a number of instrumentals and songs both on her own and with Eckstein. Married to drummer Harry Raginsky, she toured widely, performing on the BBC in England during the Second World War and across the US. She recorded three 78's for the Apex label, including the *Maple Leaf Rag*. She returned to Montreal and lived there until her death in 1976.

### **Les Policemen** La Bolduc, 1932

Mary-Rose-Anne Travers remains one of the best-loved Quebec popular chanson artists of the twentieth century. Singer, songwriter, violin and harmonica virtuoso, she was born in Newport in the Gaspé in 1894. At 13 she moved to Montréal, paying for her fare by playing the violin on the main street of Newport. Working as a domestic in Montréal, she met plumber Edouard Bolduc, and in 1917 they married. Poverty forced her to perform music again, first as a violinist, and then as a singer.

Her first recordings of her own songs were hits, selling 12,000 copies within the first months of their release. Her songs were reflections of real life, and as such won her a wide and passionate following among ordinary people. Her career lasted little more than a decade. In 1941 she died tragically young, at 46. She is seen as the founder of the chansonnier movement that transformed music in Québec, paving the way for artists like Felix Leclerc and Gilles Vigneault. A number of books about her life and music, and reissues of her songs have been produced. *Les Policemen* is a tongue-in-cheek ditty about the various attributes of men in uniform.

### **I'll Never Smile Again** Ruth Lowe, 1939

Born in Toronto in 1915, Ruth Lowe was working in a music store when Ina Ray Hutton brought her all-girl band, The Melodears, to town. Ina Ray's piano player became ill and she frantically searched for a replacement. Ruth

auditioned, got the gig, and joined the band. She was 21 years old. Two years later she married Chicago music publicist Harold Cohen. A year later Harold died during an operation.

Widowed at 23, Ruth poured her grief into a tune she named *I'll Never Smile Again*. The song premiered on CBC Radio's *Music By Faith*, featuring Percy Faith. A year later Ruth passed the song to a member of the Tommy Dorsey Band. Dorsey thought the tune was a good one and had it arranged for his young singer, Frank Sinatra. It became Sinatra's first big hit and launched his career. During World War II, the song became symbolic of the pain and loss felt by those whose friends and family members were killed in the war. Later Ruth would compose another tune for Sinatra, his closing signature song, *Put Your Dreams Away*—which was played at Sinatra's funeral. Ruth Lowe remarried and lived until 1981. In 1982 she was given an honorary Grammy and inducted into the American Music Hall of Fame.

### **Train of Progress/Union Man** Hootin' Lil Marcus, 1947

Very little is known about Lillian Marcus. Her name first appears in the November 1947 issue of *People's Songs*, the bulletin of an American left-wing music organization. The center spread of the bulletin featured two songs by Marcus and a brief description of her as the "energetic, dynamic director of *People's Songs of Canada*". There is a picture of a young woman playing the accordion. According to the short accompanying notes, Lillian Marcus attended the first Hootenanny organized in Toronto in 1946.

After hearing artists including Pete Seeger and Lee Hays of The Weavers, she was inspired to start a Toronto branch of *People's Songs* and begin writing her own compositions. She soon acquired the name Hootin' Lil. *People's Songs* brought together politically committed musicians with the goal of creating a left-wing alternative to the dominant popular culture. Using folk music, jazz and Broadway musical styles, *People's Songs* laid the foundations of the folk revival of the fifties and sixties. Marcus' songs, *Train of Progress* and *My Union Man* are the earliest published Canadian songs in this genre. No more songs have been found, and aside from greetings sent in 1948 to *People's Songs* and in 1953 to *Sing Out!*, its successor publication, no more was heard of Hootin' Lil.

### **Hockey Night In Canada Theme** Dolores Claman, 1968

Dolores Claman is a Vancouver-born composer who received her graduate training at the world-famous Juilliard School in New York City. Among her Vancouver accomplishments was the score for Theatre Under The Stars' first ever original musical—*Timber!* She was one of the first women to break into the field of "industrial" composing, building a career as a successful writer of scores for advertising, television, film, and theatre. In 1967 she wrote *A Place to Stand (Ontari-ari-ario)* for the Oscar-winning film of the same name, commissioned by the Ontario government.

The next year, Dolores wrote the theme for *Hockey Night In Canada*, a tune that has become both a genre classic and an indelible part of the Canadian sonic landscape. More than thirty years after its debut, *Hockey Night In Canada* remains one of the best selling tunes in print, recently beating out both 'N Sync and the Back Street Boys in the catalogue of Canada's leading distributor of sheet music.

Her daughter, Madeleine Morris, is a well regarded Vancouver singer-songwriter.

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## sheBOP! A century of jazz compositions by Canadian women set two

### **Tryin' To Keep Her 88's Straight** Jane Vasey, 1980

A classically trained pianist, with a master's degree in music, Jane Vasey moved to Toronto from Winnipeg in 1970. For a few years she played and wrote music for theatre. Then a friend lent her a record by Otis Spann, and Jane discovered the blues.

In 1973 she joined the very un-classical Downchild Blues Band. Combining her classical technique and her passion for the blues, Jane became the foundation of the band and the glue that held its shifting personnel together. Veteran blues artists marveled at her energetic virtuosity. In addition to covering much of the traditional blues repertoire, Vasey contributed a number of her own compositions to Downchild's repertoire. In July 1982, Jane Vasey died, at 33, from leukemia. A scholarship in her name was established at Brandon University.

### **Lucky Duck** Kathryn Moses, 1979

Flautist, saxophonist, composer, vocalist, and arranger, Kathryn Moses was born in Wynnewood, Oklahoma in 1943. At the age of twenty, she joined the Oklahoma Symphony. Four years later she had married fellow musician Ted Moses and moved to Canada. Initially Kathryn played in her husband's quintet, but in 1975 launched her own quartet and quintet, performing mainly in Toronto. Her 1976 recording for the CBC won the first Canada Council award for best jazz album.

In 1978 she recorded *Music In My Heart* which contains *Lucky Duck*. At a time when women instrumentalists were rare, Kathryn stands out even more as both a bandleader and composer. She performed with both the National Ballet and Winnipeg Ballet orchestras, recorded widely on albums by everyone from Bruce Cockburn to Chuck Mangione and on hundreds of film scores. Her own composition for 1992's Genie Award winning *Forbidden Love*, her first film score, won her international acclaim as a film composer. She continues to perform and compose from her Toronto home.

### **Blue Motel Room** Joni Mitchell, 1976

Joni Mitchell is an icon in Canadian and international music. Born in Saskatchewan, she began her performing career singing to fellow patients in a children's hospital while recovering from polio at the age of nine. She went on to study art in Calgary where she began her adult career as a folk singer. She moved to Toronto where, by the mid-sixties, she had established herself as one of the most promising songwriters on the scene. Her debut album was recorded in the US in 1967 and Judy Collins' cover of *Both Sides Now* established Joni as a major force in what became known as adult-contemporary rock music.

Always an innovator, Joni has been a ceaseless experimenter; incorporating jazz and world music in her recordings from the early seventies. *Blue Motel Room* is taken from 1976's *Hejira*, recorded with Weather Report's Jaco Pastorius and situated in Mitchell's work during what could be called her "jazz period", between her ground breaking *Hissing of Summer Lawns* (1975) and her collaborations with Wayne Shorter (1977), and Charles Mingus (1978).

### **Guidone** Jane Fair, 1975

Jane Fair started on piano as a child in Guelph, Ontario and moved on to saxophone at high school in Barrie. At 18, in 1966, she moved to Montréal to attend McGill University, where she studied French Literature. Shortly after

her arrival in Montréal she went to New York and heard John Coltrane and Ornette Coleman perform on a double bill. It was a revelation, and as soon as she finished her studies Jane threw herself into music full time.

The Montréal scene in that period was a limited one, and in 1976, Jane moved to Toronto. A strong player of soprano and tenor saxophones and adept on clarinet as well, Jane is also an accomplished arranger and composer. In Montréal, Fair had been known for her assertively contemporary style. In Toronto, she also worked in much more traditional ensembles including Jim Galloway's Wee Big Band, and The Swing Sisters. She continues to perform in Velvet Glove, an all-women ensemble. *Guidone* is inspired by, and a tribute to, Montréal's eccentric percussion genius, Guy Nadon.

### **Punishment of Baghdad** Kathy Kidd, 1999

Kathy Kidd was a multi-faceted creative artist, teacher, and child protection worker. Starting her training in classical piano at Toronto's Royal Conservatory, she expanded her musical horizons with explorations of many other musical forms. Jazz came first, and was always part of her musical life. In the early seventies, travels through Europe, the Middle East, North Africa and India filled her head with an encyclopedia of sounds she would continue to reference for the rest of her life. For two decades she explored the richness of Afro-Cuban music and particularly the impact it had on jazz. No music was foreign to her if it had passion and beauty.

Her final studies were of the pipe organ, a two-year exploration which led to the use of the 3500 pipe Casavant organ on her final recording. Kathy was an integral part of Vancouver's jazz and world music community. As a bandleader, composer, teacher, and musician she was a powerful presence in any number of ensembles. In 1991, Kathy was studying in New York city when the Gulf War broke out. *Punishment of Baghdad* was written as a protest against the American bombing of Iraq, then and now. It was recorded on her last CD, *Hajji* (one who makes the pilgrimage to Mecca) and combines African, Arab, and Cuban elements. Kathy died of cancer in 2000 shortly after *Hajji* was released.

### **Look Ma, No Hands** Karen Young, 1997

Karen Young was born and continues to live in Hudson, Quebec, up the Ottawa River from Montréal. In 1971, still a teenager; she had a minor hit record with the folksy Garden of Ursh. In the mid-seventies, Young co-founded Bug Alley, begun as a folk music trio. After discovering Lambert, Hendricks and Ross's jazz vocals, Young and the band became transformed, and one of Canada's best jazz singers was born.

The success of Bug Alley from 1976 through 1979 was followed by her eighties collaboration with Montréal bassist Michel Donato. Young/Donato blazed new trails for jazz in Montréal, while Young's Young Latins pioneered world jazz.

Karen is a singer and songwriter/composer who works from a big palette. She has mastered many vocal styles, from classic jazz to Middle-Eastern folk forms and New Music. Her recent recordings have embraced many musical genres while maintaining an approach that is both loyal to jazz and her own personal musical vision.