

CHRISTINE JENSEN

Montreal-based musician Christine Jensen has been described as, “*an original voice on the international jazz scene... [and] one of Canada’s most compelling composers,*” by Mark Miller of the *Globe and Mail*. According to Greg Buium of *Downbeat Magazine*, “*Jensen writes in three dimensions, with a quiet kind of authority that makes the many elements cohere. Wayne Shorter, Maria Schneider and Kenny Wheeler come to mind.*” After a performance at the 2006 Montreal International Jazz Festival, Scott Yanow wrote, “*She’s rapidly developing into a major force ... as a player and as a writer.*”

As a leader, Jensen has released three small ensemble recordings: ***Collage*** (2000), ***A Shorter Distance*** (2002), and ***Look Left*** (2006), all on the Effendi label. Along with her sister, New York-based trumpeter Ingrid Jensen, and close friend and long-time musical cohort, Swedish pianist, Maggi Olin, she co-leads the group, ***Nordic Connect***. They released their first joint effort featuring compositions from all three talents in 2007 entitled ***Flurry*** (on ArtistShare) and played at the Montreal International Jazz Fest 2008. Owing to the success of that performance, they are embarking on a follow-up recording due to be released in June 2009.

In a recent review of a Nordic Connect concert at the Rex in Toronto, J.D. Considine of the *Globe and Mail* described the quintet as: “*evoking the lean, cerebral drive of Miles Davis’s classic late-sixties quintet.*” He praised the “*dynamism and originality of the playing,*” and noted that in Christine’s performance style, “*ideas mattered more than dazzle.*”

Jensen took up roots, leaving Nanaimo for Montreal in 1990, completing first degree from McGill University in jazz performance in 1994. She followed this up by doing a Master’s in Jazz Performance in 2006. Christine has honed her skills as a saxophonist under the tutelage of an impressive list of leading musicians including Pat La Barbera, Kenny Werner, Jim McNeely, Remi Bolduc, Dick Oatts and Steve Wilson.

As an adjudicator, clinician, and instructor at McGill, she is influencing the next generation of composers and players. In her travels abroad, she has shared her love of music and invaluable experience with young jazz enthusiasts around the world, from Norway to Peru, Turkey to Montreal, and back home on the West Coast. She has always been active in jazz education, leading clinics and workshops and adjudicating.

Over the years, she has collaborated with a diverse array of musicians, including Geoffrey Keezer, Lenny Pickett, Brad Turner, Karl Jannuska, François Th  berge, Gary Versace, Donny McCaslin, Steve Amirault, Franck Amsallem, in addition to her long-term musical relationships with sister, Ingrid and partner, saxophonist-composer Joel Miller.

Composing has been a constant throughout her career — while she was still an undergrad at McGill, she composed the title track of her sister’s debut album, ***Vernal***

Fields (Enja, 1995), winning a Juno Award (the Canadian equivalent to a Grammy). This early recognition of her talent as a composer spurred her to keep writing. According to Jensen:

Composing seems to have chosen me, and it's become a passion to express myself. As a composer my progress has been steady, which probably differs from a lot of musicians of my generation who burst out as players first. I'm pretty lucky because composing has given me long-term growth, while improvising involves seizing the moment. Combining these two elements is the beauty of being a contemporary jazz artist.

Jensen performs and records regularly with her sister Ingrid — they have played together all over the world from Seattle's Jazz Alley to New York's Museum of Modern Art, from an SS Norway Jazz Cruise to a tour of Japan in 1997. *"There's definitely yin and yang in our approach. We come from different educational backgrounds in our later periods,"* she says. *"But we come from the same place, we grew up together, and there's a spiritual part of the playing that we're able to connect like no one else can."*

Noted for her ability to transfer the intimate sound of a quartet into larger ensembles, Jensen's music has been performed by ensembles around the globe, including the Frankfurt Radio Big Band, Germany; the UMO Big Band, Finland; and the McGill Jazz Orchestra, Montreal. She was honoured with an Opus Award for Jazz Concert of the Year in 2006, from the *Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec*, for leading the 18-member Christine Jensen Jazz Orchestra, with special guest Donny McCaslin.

In 2002, Jensen was awarded a six-month composition residency in Paris at the Québec Studio in the *Cité Internationale des Arts*, sponsored by the *Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec*. Upon her return to Canada, she toured extensively with her quartet, reworking the material that resulted in the recording, **Look Left**. The strong rapport among band members (pianist Dave Restivo, bassist Fraser Hollins, drummer Greg Ritchie, and frequent guest guitarist Ken Bibace), combined with their shared musical influences, has allowed her music to continually evolve along with her voice as a composer through her original repertoire.

Christine Jensen was born in Sechelt, British Columbia, in 1970, growing up in Nanaimo among some of Canada's finest musicians, including Phil Dwyer, Diana Krall, blues guitarist, David Gogo, and her sister Ingrid. Her pianist/mother raised her daughters on music, exposing them to everything from Chopin to Broadway to Big Bands. Jensen's first love was the piano, developing an individual style influenced by two greats: *"I freaked out over Oscar Peterson and ... Bill Evans was a big epiphany when I was a teenager, as a musician who created an impressionistic sound."* Once she started studying the saxophone at age 12, she quickly grew to love it as she realized that she could create her own voice through that instrument.

The past few years have kept Jensen busy on the international stage, taking her music to Peru, Argentina, Chile, Denmark, Mexico, Sweden, Turkey, and Haiti. In 2007, she

performed with her quartet at Dizzy's Club at Lincoln Center, as well as at the Burlington 'Discover Jazz' Festival. In October 2008, she will be launching a nationwide tour of Mexico with her sister, in conjunction with the Canadian Embassy. Jensen is frequently heard across the country live in concert on CBC radio and Radio-Canada's *Espace-Musique*.

Pendant ces dernières années, Jensen a fait le parcours de la scène jazz canadienne et internationale. Elle fait connaître sa musique aux spectateurs du Pérou, de l'Argentine, du Chili, du Danemark, du Mexique, de la Suède, de la Turquie, et aussi de Haïti.

En 2007, elle a joué avec son quartette chez Dizzy's Club au Centre Lincoln à New York ainsi qu'au Festival « Discover Jazz » à Burlington. En octobre 2008, elle lance une tournée au Mexique avec sa sœur, conjointement avec l'Ambassade du Canada.

Elle fait des apparitions partout au Canada et elle enregistre fréquemment des projets et des concerts pour CBC et sa musique est diffusée sur les ondes d'Espace-Musique à Radio-Canada.