

DOUBLY GIFTED

The Annual Bell Jazz Lecture, 2009

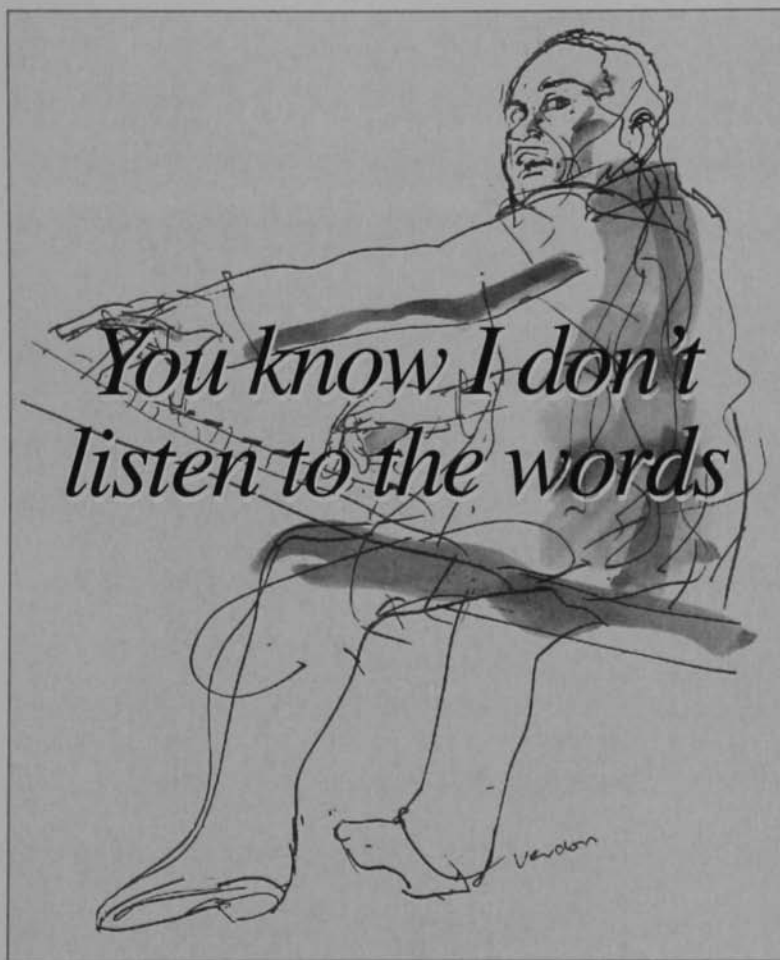


ILLUSTRATION VERDON MORCOM

Jeannie Lewis

*The Seventeenth Annual Bell Jazz Lecture
Delivered 19 September 2009
Waverley Library*



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ISBN 978-0-9757142-5-6

Published & printed by Waverley Library
32-48 Denison Street, Bondi Junction 2022

Telephone: (02) 9386 7777

Fax: (02) 9386 7700

Introduction

Once again the Double Gifted Committee presents the Bell Jazz Lecture for the 17th consecutive year. The Bell Lecture was initiated by the late Harry Stein to honour the contribution given to Australian jazz by our best loved and most appreciated jazzman, Graeme Bell, who celebrates his 95th birthday this year.

Thanks must be given to Waverley Library and to the Friends of Waverley Library, without whose support the Committee would not be able to present a prominent and experienced member of Australia's jazz community and to bring to us their individual view of jazz.

This year the Lecture is being given by Jeannie Lewis, a woman who has been actively singing since the 1950s. She began as a blues singer and has remained faithful to that genre whilst developing a career in musical theatre and featuring the songs of women in many facets and in one woman shows.

She has remarkable vocal abilities and has travelled and studied song in many areas of the world. This experience will, I am sure, enable Jeannie to present a fascinating and unique lecture.

Kate Dunbar
Doubly Gifted Committee



Jeannie Lewis

Jeannie Lewis' work on stage, in the recording studio and as a writer and teacher transcends boundaries of genre and culture. Beginning as a folk and jazz performer in the 1960s, Lewis was also regularly seen on the progressive rock scene. She has recorded several award-winning albums, collaborated with many of Australia's leading artists and created a number of successful stage shows featuring widely diverse vocal styles – from the salon songs of Edith Piaf to South American folk.

A lifelong interest in “other languages”, the people who speak them and their cultures and traditions has led to collaboration with performers from various ethnic backgrounds, nationally and internationally.

She loves to improvise, she loves the blues; she likes walking on the edge.

“The privilege of this life style for me is the friends, professional and personal it's brought me and the places it's taken me to.”



Graeme Bell

The Doubly Gifted Committee and Waverley Library have named this lecture series on jazz, the Bell Jazz Lectures, in honour of Graeme Bell's outstanding contribution to jazz in Australia and abroad over the last fifty years. He is an outstanding pianist, excellent band leader and composer of note. Graeme is also a talented artist who has exhibited in the Doubly Gifted exhibitions of visual art works by jazz musicians, as well as contributing to other exhibitions.

You know I don't listen to the words

After almost a year away in Latin America, I'd been back last year for 2 weeks staying at a friend's place when I replied to a message from Kate. She'd tracked me down to invite me to give this lecture. "Me? Why Kate? It's an honour but I'm a little dislocated body and soul- even more than usual and anyway I'm not really a jazz singer." As am sure some of you thought today. Why her? Cause she accepted?

I came to John's lecture last year and he was so entertaining, informative and amusing. The amazing part was that on reading the script after the gig, he'd managed to write it down with all the jokes and anecdotes and only a little off-the-cuff extemporising-- improvising. WOW! (*And a real plus for me. I met up with Peter Boothman after 30 years*) Well now, following the humourist jazz drummer, it's the chook singer's turn. Maybe they'll get back on track (to the musicians) next year.

Further phone calls from Kate. For PR there had to be a title. For the talk there had to be a theme. The idea of words/song lyrics and non-words seemed like a good one for a singer to pursue. *Particularly one interested in sound as much as sense. In the voice as instrument.* Hence the present title: "You know I don't listen to the words", something Alan Lee, *one of key musicians in my life*, once said to me. We were talking about repertoire "but I follow the feel from you, the feeling and movement in your voice and body". And the ensuing playing was often magic.

Round about the same time, early 1974, in the studio at EMI, to record my 2nd album, with little rehearsal time. Dave Ellis "Show me the words Jeannie, so I know what we're playing about." As an accompanist, Dave listened to words, interpreting and blending, highlighting the meaning and sense of the song with his sensitive and sensual playing, stretching the sound to match and highlight the meaning. For a singer, both of these musicians, with their different approaches, were "gifts"- very SPECIAL

Once the topic was chosen and writing begun, in discussions with friends, suggestions flowed. You should do only jazz lyrics; should do "list" songs; you should improvise, extemporize the whole piece - after all it's Jazz. Why don't you do a Spicks and Specks type guessing comp? Singing tunes to totally unrelated texts! What song is this? Do we need the words to recognize the song?

Does it matter if the words are understood - make sense?

If we're not occupied with trying to hear and understand the words, can we be more caught up in the music, the feel, the colour, the sensuality or silliness of the sound?

To quote Janet Baker, the English mezzo soprano, opera, concert and lieder singer, noted for her performances of Mahler and Elgar, writing in her autobiography *Full Circle*:

"I read a piece in the Times which stated that the higher a voice sings the less intelligible the words will be. This is absolutely true; the poor high soprano has the devil's own job to project consonants; beautiful tone for her must take precedence over clear diction. I've always felt lucky to be a mezzo; not only is the repertoire varied and interesting but most of the time lies at a tessitura where words can be intelligible. Sound has a tremendous effect, but allied to words its ability to move and stir the emotions is colossal. I could never have been an instrumentalist; sound alone is not enough for me, as a performer..... My respect for words, spoken and sung, has been total because I know how far-reaching their power can be."

Yet for me, listening to her, Lauris Elms, or Kathryn Ferrier performing Mahler's Kindertotenlieder in the original German, with just an outline of the story -- the death of the poet's children from scarlet fever - the emotional impact of the music and of their individual commitment to its interpretation is profound, even without understanding the text word for word.

*Nun will die Sonn' so hell aufgeh'n
Als sei kein Unglück die Nacht gescheh'n.
Das Unglück geschah nur mir allein
Die Sonne, sie scheint allgemein.*

*Now the sun will rise as brightly
as if nothing terrible had happened during the night.
The misfortune had happened only to me
but the sun shines equally on everyone.*

For all of us life, events, nature, evoke and provoke a primary response in sound, music, poetry, words, movement, withdrawal, whatever is our natural niche and depending, too, on the traditions, training, disposition of each of us. In Arabic communities ululation from the women marks certain ceremonies and occasions. For Friedrich Ruckert the poet, on the death of his two children, grief poured out in verse; 428 poems in an almost manic endeavour to cope with the loss. They were not for publication. The previous verses were selected by Mahler to set to music.

Myra Lambert is my singing teacher and mentor, a classical musician. On her 96th birthday last December, in response to the question "*Which is more important for you, the music or the words?*" she elaborated thoughtfully and enthusiastically on the composers with the real gift for setting and relating to words, amongst them:

Schubert, a rhythmic composer; he conjures up the darkness of the storm, the movement of the air in the storm, the ripple of water, the rustling leaves. The music came from his quick reaction to the poem. He combined meaning with sound, the poem's rhythm, tonality, the core meaning of the song. Blending melody and then the arrangement. In particular the setting for Goethe's Erlkonig - the sound of horse hooves expressed in the triplets; the slower pace for the fear of the father.

Then for her, Hugo Wolf, Brahms, Schuman, *are more sophisticated. Their music linked to the inner understanding.*

Lieder linked words and music.--

Jessie Norman, Lauris Elms, Katherine Ferrier singing Mahler's Kindertotenlieder. The tonality of the instrument could reveal in sound the actual mood, essence of poem, text.

Accompanying music is not just backing. It advances the text.

The meaning comes through in the actual sound of the accompaniment and voice as well as the lyrics; through the rhythmic patterns in music (and text) e.g.:

In Schubert's "Death and the Maiden" you can hear in the accompaniment, the relentless rhythm as death comes. Relentless, inevitable. Once death stalks you, it will get you in the end.

Bach-contrapuntal, repetitive theme, repetition of ideas

Handel - his music expressing sacred ideas - grandeur, praise, profundity. Music solemn, subdued, sombre, expansive - The Messiah.

For her, Australian "song writers" have "an identifying colour quality". A young country writing; expressive of new ideas, e.g. mine, Ross Edwards, Nigel Westaway.

The goal of the performer/ interpreter is Communication. Even in abstract music, where the mood is carried by music without text, it is coloured by emotional content.

The Listeners' reaction - their interpretation depends on their mood at the time and their experience, life and musical..

Of course the Composer, Lyricist, Arranger may be the one person.

As a child (a while back that is), I would sit for ages on the outside loo (less expensive than under the shower), inventing, creating radio plays - serials (might have appeared as if I was talking to myself even then); singing; and with a poetry book in hand, setting the poems to music -singing the poems-- well I was an only child of older parents. Until my dad would ask if one had to pay to get into the Opera House (long before the winged wonder had taken flight).

Across my earliest musical backdrop - flash folk songs; musicals (live and cinematic); and international song and dance troupes.

The first music for me originated in the world of folk music: camp fire songs, militant songs; Australian bush songs - with their very male lyrics and stories; songs in various languages from various cultures. All this marked and moulded me in differing ways, some detrimental professionally, but also on the positive side, it opened doors to the people and performers from many different cultural backgrounds, now so much a part of me as person and performer.

Another influence was the world of musical flicks and shows - Oklahoma, South Pacific, Carousel, West Side Story, Oliver, My Fair Lady, Gigi, Yentl, etc. My mum in a sweet tuneful voice (though she thought not) sang to me and taught me some of my first songs in English and in French. My dad also as a very young boy apparently would stand outside his dad's barber shop in Surry Hills spruiking to attract customers - maybe that's how he was spotted for the Synagogue. He sang in the Great Synagogue as a boy. In later years at home he would sometimes fool around in a falsetto voice in what seemed like make-up Hebrew. (He would have loved me, if music was to be my path, to be a classical singer. Both parents would have preferred a more secure way of life for their only child.) After the stroke which took away his power of speech, one day, with signs and sounds he got me to put on his favourite recording of mine - a Johann Strauss Waltz- and we danced to it till tears appeared.

This song had been found for me by my inspirational friend, the painter Martin Sharp - Dorothy Greville's words, somewhat prophetic and romantically tongue in cheek, or tongue in cheekily romantic.

How light and gay an artist's way, Without a care from day to day, Both heart and pocket light it seems But always there are dreams. The dream that fame will come some day, And love is never far away And he wishes too, for himself and you, that dreams may all come true."

Coming from the world of folk music, the words, poetry stories were as important to me as the music. And still and always the words have to mean something to me, to be able to sing them.

Sometimes the texts of the songs were beyond my experience. An early case of lyrics not really understood, or taken at a very immediate level; at about 13 years of age probably, at an evening sing around the fire at a JEL camp a young JL is singing *I'm Just a Girl Who Can't Say No* with a very naive take on the song-- it was acted out behind me, I later discovered, by a much more "mature" and bohemian camper - possibly a member of the push.

Looking back from the perspective of a chook singer, words, lyrics, paroles, letras have always been important, basic to me. Horror of horrors, I often chose songs because of what they said and not because of the way the melody moved, or the rhythm sat. I'd try to make that work, if it was weak, to compensate, through the words and meaning. Sometimes it was a case of finding suitable songs for the occasion, frequently a "free gig" - 'It would be lovely to have music', or a benefit gig - anti-war protests, pro-civil rights; Solidarity causes; as well as birthdays, weddings and now, more often, funerals and memorials figure on the "circuit".

A variance on this: With the *York Gospel Singers*-- we began performing at the York Club- on York Street. Voices: Alison McCallum, Bob Connery, myself, John Bates on bass, Viv Carter on drums, Adrian Ford - piano, Chris Dawe - guitar. Being a non believer, with each song, where necessary, I would invent my own story to make it (the words) ring true and passionate for myself. *I can't help the*

way I feel I know something's got a hold on me- You can translate that something for yourselves. I did - though I worried less about my non-religious affiliations on meeting some of the cast from Black Nativity. No no no "*I Just Can't Help It*".

The peak of our time together was our appearance at Sydney Town Hall as opener for Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee.

We had all met up through performing with Geoff Bull's Olympia Jazz Band at the Orient. Prior to that, I'd spent about a year singing along in the back room of the Royal George, with John Laver on guitar, Shane Duckham on mouth harp- my earliest forays into "the blues" starting with "*Every Night when the Sun Goes Down*" learnt from the singing of Ronnie Gilbert, the female voice in the once blacklisted group, The Weavers.

This was the 60s: time of hope for change, nuclear fears, accent on generational differences and a boom in folk music. It produced some great singer-song writers. As well as singing on the street at demos, I was performing solo on the "*booming*" folk club circuit of the 60s, accompanying myself on guitar, adding extra bars, modifying tempos, interpreting the song as I chose. There were some fast lessons to be learnt of sticking to the number of bars as played by the band, as in the song. First with the Bull Band, later with Ray Price and then with a much broader repertoire with Nat Oliver.

Being perverse, in early years on the folk circuit, when the Joan Baez label was occasionally glued to me, even though I had consciously avoided her repertoire, I turned more to male singers - specifically Lead Belly- Huddie Ledbetter - for repertoire sound and style! First of his songs being "Black Girl", a conversation between a man and a woman. Sometimes the words were "male" viewpoints - sung by a woman? Why not? One night at Witty's Wine Bar, Bob Connery affixed the Janis Joplin label. Well once I actually heard her, though undeserved, I thought Wow, to be able to *sing* those chords!. In Latin America both are still affixed to my singing.

The three major sources of interest/ attraction to me, have been and still are-

1. The song-writers and in the folk / pop/ blues/ jazz scenes - there are many good ones--- right here in Australia. Then, of course, those from other English speaking countries and, then, the great French and Belgian exponents - Brel, Brassens; also the Greek composers. And then especially for me, the wealth of wonderful poets and composers and traditional music, the multitudes of rhythms, dances, instruments singing styles from all over Latin America. Far too many to name them all here, in whichever language we choose - writers that is.

2. Then, as of course with each of us with our own instrument, the SOUND calls us in - summons us. For me this has been so since early on; voices that move the heart, touch the soul, and chill the spine: Paul Robeson, Martin Luther King, Declan Affley, Marian Henderson, Judy Henske, Grace Slick, Phil Ochs, Wendy Saddington, Geoffrey Gurrumul Yunupingu, Juan Carlos Rios, Cesaria Evora,

Ivan Rebroff, Monserat Caballe, Freddie Mercury, Staple Singers, Schwenke and Nilo. Then the *types* of voices, for me, the sound of little children's voices - talking, singing, giggling; boy sopranos; Mexican voices, that catch your heart in your throat.

3. Then there are the vocal stylists and experimenters and extenders of Technique and Possibilities. This is the area which really attracts me //draws me in; people who know their instrument and dare to extend the voice, to explore its possibilities – as any other instrumentee might. These arouse my curiosity, attract, excite, inspire me. Also included here are those whose cultures and traditions are so rich in vocal improvisation - flamenco, Arabic, African, Indian. This is the largest section of my record collection, from the controlled to the absurdly wild.

It includes: Roy Hart, Magdalith, Colette Magny (French singer, writer, composer, revolutionary in form and content). Since she entered my world, first through recordings, she has been an inspiration and one could say, a mentor for me. As well as her composition and her vocal scape, one of the most influential aspects of her work for me is the work she did with autistic children, in the 70s, in France. *Je Veux Chaaanter* – (*I Want to Siiiiing*), the title of the goose-bump giving album she made with them and the poem from it, of a child's point of view on what it's like to "not speak" and not to be "normal".

"YOU SPEAK, HE SPEAKS, THEY SPEAK..
I WANT TO LEARN TO SPEAK
I WANT TO LEARN TO SAY
THAT IF I AM HERE
IT'S NOT MY MUMMY'S FAULT
IT'S THOSE OTHERS WHO SPEAK "WELL"
AND WHO FIND THAT NOT TO SPEAK WELL IS NOT NORMAL.

I'M NOT NORMAL
I DON'T KNOW HOW TO SPEAK
OR IF I SPEAK, I SAY WHAT'S GOING ON
IN MY HEAD.
BECAUSE IN MY HEAD, THERE,S MY OWN WORLD
AND MY WORLD, IT'S NOT THE SAME AS OTHERS.

WAIT...
I AM GOING TO SING YOU A SONG THEY TAUGHT ME AT SCHOOL.
I DIDN'T LIKE IT AT FIRST YOU KNOW, AT SCHOOL THEY TOLD MEI
HAD TO LEARN IT,
BUT, IF YOU LIKE, I WOULD LIKE TO SING YOU MY SONG
ONLY IT'S NOT EASY..
THIS ONE NOONE EVER taught ME TO SING
BUT IF you, YOU WANT TO HEAR IT, I'LL TELL IT TO YOU
ONLY, YOU UNDERSTAND, YOU HAVE TO LISTEN TO ME WELL,
BECAUSE WHAT I AM GOING TO SING, NOONE HAS EVER HEARD YET,
THAY DIDN'T WANT TO LISTEN

OTHERWISE, I WOULDN'T BE HERE, SAYING WHATEVER,
UNDERSTAND?
BUT IF YOU, YOU WANT TO UNDERSTAND IT,
I WILL SING IT FOR YOU"

(Original in French: Christiane Vouriot 1979 from the Institut Medico-Pedagogique de Fontenoy-le-Chateau Vosges, France. work with Colette Magny & the children of the Institute on the project "Je Veux Chanter" English translation: Jeannie Lewis 1990.)

Then there's Leon Thomas, Betty Carter, Flora Purim, Rhiannon from the group Alive, Liliana Felipe, Julie Tippetts, Jeannie Lee, Bobby McFerrin, Abbey Lincoln, Kurt Ealing, Jo Truman; Miriam Makeba, Perla de Cadiz, Kerrie Biddell, Ellen McIlwaine, Janis Joplin, Chavela Vargas, Cassandra Wilson, Marion Williams, Edson Cordeiro, Sweet Honey in the Rock, Zap Mama, Reggie Watts, Graham Lowndes, Um Kalthoum, Katie Noonan, etc, etc.

And then, of course, there are the Creative and Krazy performers who often combine at least 2 of previous – i.e. adventurous repertoire with a great sound/ good repertoire stretched to the edge in style and performance.

Margret RoadKnight, Maria Callas, Meow Meow, Reggie Watts, Nina Simone, Cassandra Wilson, Roberto Goyaneche, Reg Livermore and the non vocal instrumentalists who have inspired and influenced me - mostly without them knowing - John Luc Ponti, Ravi Shankar Yehudi Menuhin, Peter Boothman, John MacLaughlin, Jim Conway, Jim Cotter, Mikis Theodorakis, Barry Sutton, Dave Ellis, Nat Oliver, Judy Bailey, Maurie Mulheron, Robert Gavin, Peter Kenny, Jeremy Cook, Justo Diaz, Michael Carlos.

Outstanding among these is Kerrie Biddell. Watching her and hearing her give a Master Class at Sydney Cabaret Convention a few years ago, was a revelation. Caressing the words and the meaning with such sensuality and sensibility, sensitivity, intelligence and musicality. Her true tone and note. Young girl innocence and yearning came through the words and music.

From her CD "The Singer", *Is That Jazz* by Tony King. "... and you want to sing along but the melody's absurd di d' d' Did you forget the words? Is that Jazz? Is that Jazz? Is that Jazz?"

And, Margret RoadKnight. Margret has played an impressive role in defusing and inspiring lesser known and established fabulous contemporary song writers, poets and composers- among them John Shortis, Malvina Reynolds, Dave Dallwitz, Taj Mahal, Miles Davis, Oscar Brown Junior, David Bentley. She is a consummate performer with a great sense of humour. She always remembers the punch line. -- She continues to surprise me with her ever-varied, multi hued vocal palette, her knowledge and the wonderful songs she keeps on discovering. Including this song *Call It Jazz* by Janet Small from the group *Alive*:

Is it blues, is it gospel, worksong or soul? Is it ewe or bembé perhaps calypso? Samba or rumba It's all these and more Call it Jazz, if you like.

Is it avant guard, classic blues, standards or swing? Is it Dixieland bebop or ballads I sing?

Well it could be any of these and all of these things Call it Jazz

*Now if you're travelling across the disunited states of America
So many different cultures all around. Yeh they abound
So you just keep looking and listening Try to keep an open mind
Cause it is amazing what you'll find All kinds of sounds*

Is it African, Cajun, Black white yellow brown? Is it city or country, sure does get around?

Well it's everything each of has lived and loved and learned And So for lack of a better word Let's call it jazz

Yeh that originally indigenous american but now truly international creative art form called Jazz

Judy Jacques, Doubly, Triply, Multi-gifted winner of inaugural Bell award for best jazz vocal album 2003 for her CD "*Making Wings*". From the song *Heart of the Island**I'm hearing a song -through the heart of the island-not like a word- a sound - a lost thing- like fire- with nothing to hold to- I'm hearing a song- I can't speak a word"*

Miriam Makeba – singer, dancer, performer extraordinaire. Her concert at the Opera House, in 1995, was a truly spiritually uplifting experience. My heart felt like it had risen in my chest.

Then there are those where the word and the rhythm is the way:

Lenny Bruce talking to jazz; Gill Scott Heron, the father of rap - his voice his poetry!- I first heard him live in the company of my Puerto Rican boyfriend, a white man with afro features and curly afro hair at a 1977 performance in Oakland California in an all Black audience!

Certainly in RAP the words are basic-- and now, too, the dance and movement. Though have recently heard RAP in Spanish in Argentina and Chile without actually understanding the words, just getting the drift from the performance energy. In May 2008 I participated in a walk to the Law Courts in Santiago Chile, to present a petition with his widow and 2 daughters, demanding after 35 years, the naming of the assassins of the Chilean singer Victor Jara. On the paved plaza in front of the building the dance company *Espiral* performed;- their final pose, fists raised - one of them right in the face of an anxious, but unsmiling, young policeman. This was then followed by a young guy, improvising, I think, a rap about this occasion. Hip-Hop is alive and well in Chile. In fact, an email just arrived with photos from a festival of JipJoperos to celebrate children's day.

The theme of my first album was Flight - of the *featherless* kind. 'Cause, despite all the talk about flying and letting go, one of my two main phobias is vertigo, first experienced at the Echo Point Look Out as a child; the other, claustrophobia, experienced especially on planes.

Next main theme is preoccupation with water and distance and “other” and cardinal points, geographical and of the heart and life.

Now I seem to be at a stage to do with light.:

Leonard Cohen’s *Anthem*- There is a crack, a crack in everything. that’s how the light gets in.

Eric Bibb’s *Turn On All the Lights*.

Tuck and Patti’s *You’ve Got to Live in the Light-- This Little Light of Mine*.

And a rap song for and about my young friends in the north of Argentina - living without electricity, and all that that means in this highly advanced technological world:

Quiero Luz Quiero luz

Dame luz. Dame luz. Dame Luz luz luz

No quiero este oscuridad Quiero lo que me debe a mi edad

Quiero ir a Cyber, Quiero mirar Tele

Estudiar en casa y no con vela

Me quema Me quema

Viene el viento en la noche

Paga la vela en casa d’abuela

Quiero luz. Dame luz. Quiero Luz luz luz

PRENDE LA LUZ!

Languages you don’t understand, or those you hear for the first time, wash over you like the sensation of the ocean as you push through the waves along the shoreline. You are aware of the movement the sensation, the flow the line of the melody, the rhythms and the dumpers, rather than individual words and notes. As a child it’s those waves you begin to imitate and play with.

As you familiarise yourself with the sound, you pick up individual notes, words, maybe phrases, and it begins to break up into those sound and word snatches. You begin to lose the original flow and rarely re-capture it, even when you are perfectly at ease using the language, because now you are inside it and it is inside you, not like when it was new and just flowed outside and over you in sonic and emotional waves.

Child or adult, with each new language it’s the sound of a language that impinges on you first. Harsh, sensual, jagged, sing song, sexy, funny. The sounds without the meaning.

Learning music by ear, depends on the *earing* of the individual - and the style of the teacher, but we pick up the phrases-- the whole. Later’ if we get serious, we learn to break down the phrases into notes and to read the notes, count the lengths, build phrases and put it all together again with dynamics and feeling and eventually we can communicate in that language ourself.

Learning a song in another language, as a child, can be such fun - a nonsense game. Two languages together, music and words. It may be years later that the

meaning of the words suddenly comes to you. It took years of Christmas carolling, singing *Silent Night* (one of my favourites), to work out what the roundyon virgin was. *Roundyon virgin? Roundyonvirgin* was all one word to me and I didn't have a clue what it meant, not the virgin, or what she was round and where was yon. Learning a song as at any age, the music, the rhythm helps the memorising of the words - as does the rhyme, especially for young children - nursery rhymes.

Then in 1970, while working in accounts in a union office - filing, pre computers - at breaks I would occasionally sit with my guitar in the stairwell and practise. One of the women clerical workers asked me about the Cuban song, *Guantanamera*. The lyrics by the famous Cuban poet Jose Marti. "It means girl from Guantanamo. Not a detainee or a prisoner. The guajira bit - is the style of music- usually lyrical about the countryside." "Oh", she smiled, "I always heard Guantanamera as *Once in a meadow*." Well that's sort of country.

Listening or singing along in another language you can just let the song wash over you, or move you to tears, go with the flow of your feelings and the reactions of others in the public. For example, listening to the great Egyptian singer Om Kalthoum, you can be carried away by the sound, skill, feeling without having any idea of the words- Apparently the poetry is exquisite. If you hear a live recording in Egypt, the audience responses can cue one in to "meaning" and approval. Like apparently in earlier opera performances where a well executed aria would receive cheers on the spot and could even result in fights between audience re favourite singers.

Maybe it's better not to know the words. Beautiful tunes can be married with simplistic pastoral lyrics about sheep and spring garlands - not necessarily in that combination.

Better to leave the marriage unmarred by translation. And sometimes translation into a singable form drifts a long way from the original meaning. Lose the essence, the sense and, of course, "the sound".

As the singer in performance, as opposed to perhaps a child, or someone learning a song phonetically, it's preferable to know the meaning of each word, so you don't put an emphasis on the ands and buts and prepositions and gliss over some pivotal word or two. Well that's the way I look at it. However, first comes the "sound" of the language and the pronunciation, as cute as singers can sound singing in another language with their own accent. My Argentinian friend - guitarist and multi instrumentalist, Justo Diaz, usually takes his time getting around to correcting me. But even he, finally could no longer put up with me saying *cagar*, to shit, when it should have been with an 'rrr', *cargar*. to load, charge (e.g. "cargando un fusil" - loading a gun.)

There's the traditional versus contemporary those who write about *their actual* reality; those who stick with a past reality; and the *Great songs which have a universal and spiritual relevance without a time reference*. Amongst migrants in Australia there are those who sing songs of the past in traditional styles and those

whose lyrics and music reflect their reality as migrants, outsiders, newcomers in this society. This usually takes some generations. Greeks and Vietnamese have reached that point here, certainly as poets and comics. In their country of origin there are more who reflect their world as it is now, as well as traditional folk performers.

In 1984 the Greek Australian composer, Tassos Ioanni, invited me to perform in his song cycle *Ta Paratragouda*, a cycle of 16 poems written, in Greek, by a poet living here. My five songs were written out phonetically for me, with the meaning of each and every word hand-written by me, above the Greek. The poems seemed very dark and depressive. Presumably at least some of the other songs would treat the lighter and humorous side of being a (Greek) migrant in Australia. But, no!. All of them were pretty heavy. That was revealed at the premiere performance in Melb Concert Hall televised for SBS. I was terrified. The final word in the cycle sung -spoken by me was *Afomiosan- alienation*. Boy did I feel it. Well and truly outside my comfort zone.

Next we are to go to Athens Festival. Three days before our departure, my car with the phonetic transcripts in the boot is stolen. The police recover it at the Central Markets the next day, minus a box of my Tears of Steel LP's and with the car itself smelling of vitamin B. They'd emptied out a bottle of tablets all over the inside. The transcripts however were intact. Didn't seem to be marketable. We could go.

To my ear and soul, most songs, most poetry sounds better in its original language. Luis Bonfa's *Manha de Carnaval*- is such a beautiful and much played melody by South Americans and jazz musicians alike. Which sounds better, the original soft sensual Brazilian Portuguese, or the English translation?

On the other hand, with the experience of attending many concerts in foreign languages I always appreciate the performer giving you an idea of the theme or story. *Genny y el Zeppelin* is a fantastic story song by one of Brazil's most popular and prolific composers, Chico Buarque. It takes quite a while to give a synopsis of the story before singing, but the option of making a singable translation is just too daunting.

In 1993 in Buenos Aires the tango song *Balada Para un Loco* first came into my life. It gave me spinal chills. *The test*. It was in a small bar sung by Amelita Baltar - the partner of the composer, Astor Piazzolla. Though Piazzolla was mostly dismissive of singers and said he didn't write for them, he left some powerful songs behind. Several of them including this one, co written with the Argentinian poet Horacio Ferrer

With *Balada Para un Loco*, Ballad for a Crazy Person, I finally opted for translating. The story is important and would require a lengthy telling. Tango, like blues, like the songs of Piaf, like New Orleans Creole, has its own slang, its own argot. "Piantao" sounds much more off the wall than craZEE

What do you reckon?

*Ya se que estoy piantao, piantao, piantao ..
No ves que va la luna rodando por Callao
que un corso de astronautas y ninos, con un vals,*

*me baila alrededor ...
Baila! Veni! Vola!
Ya se que estoy piantao, piantao, piantao ...
Yo miro a Buenos Aires del nido de un gorrion;
y a vos te vi tan triste ...
Veni! Vola! Senti!
el loco berretin que tengo para vos
Loco! Loco! Loco!
Cuandoanochezcaen tu portena soledad,
por la ribera de tu sabana vendre
con un poema, y un trombon
a desvelarte el corazon.*

Words can get you into life-threatening political and legal/ libel trouble, or, more commonly, just get you censored by silence. Music not so likely-- though Mikis Theodorakis and Shostakovich are two very notable exceptions to this.

When Miriam Makeba first came to Australia, to Sydney in the mid 60's, death threats led to the cancellation of all performances. On a radio interview here in the mid 90's for her first solo tour, when asked a question about *world music* she responded with "Oh you mean Third World Music."

Paul Robeson and Pete Seeger were blacklisted prior and during the McCarthyist witch hunts; voice silenced, media access denied, passport (Robeson) cancelled.

When Billie Holiday approached her recording label, Colombia, about recording *Strange Fruit*, Colombia, fearing a backlash by record retailers in the South as well as possible negative reaction from affiliates of Colombia's co-owned radio network, CBS, they refused to record the song. It was then recorded on Commodore by Mitt Gabler (uncle of comedian Billy Crystal.)

Perhaps less well known and more of a surprise is the case of Yip Harburg- lyricist for the *Wizard of Oz*. Harburg was brought before HUAC, House of UnAmerican Activities Committee and cited against him were the lyrics of "that song" about the *Rainbow*. This signature song had received an Academy Award for best original song and recognition as the greatest movie song of all time by the American Film Institute.

And in other countries silencing has taken a less subtle more visible and violent course of imprisonment, torture, assassination.

My favourite quote to do with the often discussed separation of Art and Politics comes from the much admired and beloved Uruguayan poet Mario Benedetti. In the preface to his book *Poemas de Otros - Poems of Others* he says "... Some of these poems have political references, but even these end up being love poems. Perhaps this is a way of saying that politics in its soundest and highest sense is also a form of love."

Sounds of voices too, have been the object of censorship: In the 4th century AD the church fathers, ever a force over the destiny of the singing voice, banished the

sexually arousing sound of the female voice from services. The only singing condoned was that of nuns and their voices were trained to sound sexless and devoid of human expression. The church now frequently had to rely on the capabilities of young boys to cope with the ranges that usually belonged to women. And from here, the chapter in history of the castrati.

Then there are the songs without words.

In 1993 I finally made it to the Roy Hart International Theatre Centre in the south of France. They specialize in extended vocal techniques. The Centre is named after Roy Hart of the 8 octave voice, for whom Peter Maxwell Davies wrote *Poems for a Mad King*. My two teachers were Jonathan Hart and Richard Armstrong.

Afterwards I attended further workshops with Richard, on the island of Corsica, in his adopted hometown of Bastia

There the *Complainte Corse, (Corsican Lament)* entered my world. It was written at the end of World War II. Corsica was the first "part of France" to be liberated. In 1993 they were celebrating 50 years since liberation.

The song, and the performance moved me to tears. Without understanding a single word! Christiane who sang it, was a more senior member of a group from a local choir participating in the workshop. Along with some quite young participants were Raymond, the Choirmaster and his wife Paule. A mixed group in age, 18 to 70ish, and consequently in musical and life experience.

I asked Christiane for a copy of the music. On the final day she arrived with a brown paper envelope, "for Jeanne" Inside, the *original* of the sheet music from 1945. "Non, non. It's all right. I have a photo copy for myself."

There *are* words to the song. However, at the time of first performing it here, in 1995, attempts to find a Corsican speaker came to naught. We might have chosen to add the lyrics, if our one Corsican contact in Sydney had responded to our calls for help with the pronunciation. There is a singable French translation, however it looks a bit too far from the original for me. But it's a haunting tune to ooh along to. Hence the vocalise of a beautiful arrangement by composer, and brilliant pianist, Ian Farr. We recorded this on *Tango Australis* in 1998.

For this same concert, my 50th Birthday Bash at the now defunct Harbourside Brasserie, (yet another venue transformed into apartments??), a Chinese friend, ex-performer with the Beijing Opera where he had specialised in young men's roles (i.e. falsetto voice), taught us a beautiful popular song, "*The River*". SuWei sang the words, in a folk (i.e. non falsetto) voice. I 'oohed' along accompanied by Jeremy Cook's very distinctive arrangement for tabla, Blair Greenberg; bass, Dave Ellis; quena, Justo Diaz; and drums - Jeremy.

Song of the Birds was introduced to me by Dave Ellis. At the time, 1997-98 we were working with *Tango Australis*—Dave; Justo Diaz – guitar, charango, s amponias, quenas; Jose Luis Betancor on bandoneon; Jeremy Cook - drums percussion; and later, joining us for the recording, Jim Conway and Lloyd

Swanton. Dave, transcribed it and lent me a recording of Pablo Casals with Arthur Rubenstein. So, no words. It's a great piece for improvising; the changes and the rhythms. During his self imposed exile from Spain, Catalonia, the period of Franco's regime, Casals had closed all his concerts with this song. It is a Catalan Christmas Carol. At the Barcelona Olympics Closing or Opening Ceremony, not sure which, it was sung by the wonderful Monserrat Caballe. Finally heard the words-- in Catalan! An audience member sent me a copy of the text in Catalan and Spanish. Have never attempted them. But the song gets used in most of my voice workshops with singers and dancers etc. "Thanks Dave"

So these 3 songs from Corsica, Tibet, and Catalonia form part of my repertoire of *songs without words*.

As the singer song writer Sydney Carter says:

*Words, love, music;
but that doesn't mean that there will be a wedding.
Love and marriage don't go together like a horse and carriage.*

*Words, love, music;
but can get along without the matrimony of a song.*

*Words can be said or chanted
and not bound to any note of music
and guitars can wander off alone for bars and bars.*

Though tune and poem travel with each other, each one may end up married to another.

*The altar's not where all true loving ends:
words and music can be just good friends.*

My experience as a performer in other languages, is mostly with French and Spanish and, phonetically, Greek, Russian, Tagalog, Bulgarian, Italian and one song in Polish. The latter, *Taki Paysage* I heard in a concert performed by Eva Demarcyk at the Perth Festival, 1985. It gave me such chills- her voice and the whole performance - I wanted to learn it and to be able to do the vocal shivers of her style in this particular song. The family of a Polish friend transcribed it and then recorded a spoken version of the words to facilitate learning. It became part of *Life Love Death and the Weather*, a dance piece created and performed in 1998 with Steve Blau on Keyboards. No, we weren't the dancers but the live sound track.

Improvisation

For all this preoccupation with words and languages, what I love best is to improvise, not just in a flash of panic when the words of the song won't come. Working with Steve gave plenty of scope for this.

Our initial experience had been creating, (rehearsing and performing) *Love, Life Death and the Weather* in 1998, with dancers Patrick Harding Irmer, (Steve's cousin) and Anka Frankenhauser, and choreographe/director, Chrissie Koltai.

For three months we all met twice a week at the Woolloomooloo Community Centre, improvising, experimenting, developing, uncovering, disclosing the piece, which eventually we presented for a week at the Performance Space. Each bringing songs and emotions from our present and past situations. It was a wonderful work-process for me, a privilege.

Steve had been diagnosed the year before with Leukaemia. Jenny Mills his partner took the PR photos - I'm still using mine untouched. Well it's only two handfulls of years back.

From there we began to work as a duo – Jan.1999, Hong Kong Fringe Festival, with an edited version of Piaf *The Songs and the Story* and a new cabaret piece *The Bag Lady Calls the Tune*. We made two appearances at the Sydney Cabaret Convention, performance highlights for me, and several corporate gigs. The most memorable of the latter being in the foyer of the Cronulla cinema complex, tiled floors, booming acoustics, an opening night party. The audience chatted non-stop among themselves. We performed our predominantly Piaf sets for each other and a few persistent fans who stood right in front of us, so they could hear above the din. Afterwards I went to a Lebanese take-away and hung out on the street for a bit with a few locals, eating and chatting before heading home.

July 2003. Hullo Steve! A few words to say it will be really good to have you participating in this project. You're one of the few musicians, few people, with whom I have gone through a creative process like we did in Woolloomooloo, where, with time, all the life experiences that came out were transformed and / or, raw as they were, became part of the piece.

In Feb. at your home, your Window on the Water, you made me very happy with your offer to try out ideas live and on tape, and your understanding of my 'improvisations', and the possibility of losing them, -your knowledge of this way of working which I have not had the privilege to use very often. Most experimenting has happened under the glare of lights on stage, or at the mike, with glass and fag in hand in a pub., or bar - notably the Limerick Castle with Boothman, Ellis and Dwyer - a wonderful time for me of learning and opening. So I'm looking forward to using this as part of the process for this SOUTHHEART recording.

Steve is best known for his blues piano expertise and passion. For me one of the highlights of working with him was his willingness to venture into new territories. Always open to working outside his comfort zone, he would spend time rehearsing and capturing the essence of the music, whatever it might be. In *Life Love Death and the Weather...* we had included Peter Sculthorpe's *The Stars Turn from Love 200*. (The first performance of this had been with Tully and the SSO, conducted by John Hopkins at the 1970 Proms in Sydney Town Hall.)

And so on their wedding night, at The Unity Hall, when Steve's first suggestion was the tango, *Malena*, it was only a small surprise. He had invited Jeremy and Justo too. As well as Marlene, there was *Como La Cigarra* - Like the Cicada; a full on version of my blues song *Boat of Dreams* and at Jenny's request "our song" as a duet, *His Eye Is On The Sparrow*.

Steve and his partner of 20 years, photographer Jenny Mills, had invited their friends, among them many fellow musicians, to a party at the Unity Hall in Balmain. At about 6 pm Jenny and Steve with their two children, Annika, 13 and Zigi 9, appeared at the top of the stairs looking stunningly radiant - (though Steve was so thin in his loose hanging designer jacket). They'd got married that afternoon. A surprise for nearly everyone in the room. Once the music began it continued non-stop till about 10pm with Steve there at the keyboard practically all the time, - at least sitting in with each group. The Foreday Riders, Colin Watson, John Calder, members of the Wiggles- whose music he'd arranged and played on, and so many more.

Both smiling, Jenny and Steve danced a bridal waltz- Jenny overheard whispering to Steve "you know I don't like dancing in front of lots of people." All through the night if you looked around you could see people smiling through tears.

The room was so full of love.

What a generous gift to all of us, this shared celebration. Thank you Jenny and Steve, Annika and Zigi, for the occasion.

The following Sat., 8th August 2004, a phone call - Steve was no more. We all met up again at the funeral. Annika gave a most moving and honest tribute to her dad.

Don't Forget to Tell the People You Love You Love Them

Don't forget to tell the people you love that you love them

Your family and your friends

Tell them what you think of them

Cause you never know when you're never gonna see them again

We're not driving this bus we're on we're just the passengers

All we can do is get off at the stop

We can't control how heavy the traffic

Or if we get to where we're going - late or not

I wake up in the morning and I think about

The life I live and the friends I've got

And even in my time of fear and doubt

I wouldn't be anyone else for a million bucks

You can fantasize about what you could be

A millionaire or a movie star

But then again you could be a refugee

Just thank your lucky stars for who you are

And don't forget to tell the people you love that you love them

They drive you mad sometimes but they're your friends

Tell them what you think of them

Cause you never know when you're never gonna see them again.

No you never know when, you'll never see them, again

Dennis Aubrey wrote this song, inspired by a moment in an episode of *Six Feet Under*, just about the time of his mother's death, in 2004. On the week after his mother's death he sang it at the Orange Grove Hotel.

Dennis is one of my favourite song writers. He is truly street wise. He spent many years busking, - the toughest test of performing. His songs including *Westpac Girl*, *Baggage*, usually with a touch or three of irony and humanity, from an insider's viewpoint. He didn't approve of my recording of his *Bag Lady's Waltz on Tango Australis*-- too much like jazz- not highlighting the lyrics.

I love *Improvising sound, music AND words*. The latter usually in Blues format - or story telling over a riff or feel. One example, in Mexico, with The Necks, for the Cervantes Festival in 1987, we invented a blues with lyrics in English and Spanish, all about that particular night. Much easier, simpler than carving out & honing a really perfect new song.

It dates professionally possibly, from as early as the Moreton Bay National Folk Festival. There, hours were spent off-stage, improvising with Graham Lowndes, Margret RoadKnight and others... over gospel songs, "freedom songs" and folk-songs and riffs.

Then beginnings for me of improvisation as composition. For Peter Sculthorpe, with members of Tully, I participated in a directed, improvised performance at the Cell block. The ABC invited me to "sing" the poetry of Rodney Hall and for Jim Sharman's film *Shirley Thomson Versus the Aliens*, the sound track with Nathan Waks, Kydric Shaw and Terry Wilson included a 30 second vocal orgasm- "*out and in; thank you Jim*" I said.

With languages too, when in doubt I improvise with reference to what is known. Cooking too!.

In the late 60's - French's with the ForeDay Riders, Tuesday nights. Their regular singer - Jill? - was still at school so they needed a replacement for weeknights. One of my favourites with them was an improvised train ride on a riff in A. With all the innuendos that one can imagine - some verbal, mostly sound. There, one of my most important musical companions entered my world. Terrifying and exciting for me and the audience, especially if one of them got too close to the vibraphone - and consequently to the receiving end of his sticks - Alan Lee. Alan over the years broadened my listening and contributed so much to repertoire - classical music and jazz. He knew my unwillingness to sing words I couldn't relate to and, in later years, was reticent to put religious songs my way - but, when the tunes are great, and the message not too blatant they are, after all, songs of the spirit.

In Melbourne in the early 70s there was lots of time playing tunes and "moon music" with Brian Brown, Dave Tolley, Ted Vining, Ron Sandilands, Ray Martin, Ken Schroder, Tony Gould, Ian Mawson, Bobby Sedergreen, Murray Wall, most of whom I got to know through Alan at the Prospect Hill in Kew and at the ? Inn (in Brunswick). In retrospect, because at the time one is so caught up in the magic of the moment, my lack of musical education probably drove them round the bend. But we, well I, had a great time listening and expanding and exploring.

Also, later in Sydney with Roger Frampton, Phil Treloar crawling round the floor and maybe up the walls, playing the furniture in Roger's house.

What marked me forever - yes, a marked woman - was the time spent in 1975, Tuesdays at the Limerick Castle with Peter Boothman, Dave Ellis, Bruce Dwyer, Roger Fairbrother and occasional guests who dropped in/sat in. From Peter and Dave I learnt so much about "voicing". Imitating their sounds, their phrasing, each of us always listening to the others, ready for/open to a new turn, a different trajectory in rhythm, or harmony. The repertoire - vehicles with lots of space for improvising, included Peter's *The Magician*, and *The Face*; Bernie Besasparis *Feet*; JJ Cale's *Don't Go To Strangers*; Billy Ed Wheeler's *High Flying Bird* and pieces that grew out of riffs, feels, modes, on the night. There the story telling to music grew. On one such night with Judy Bailey sitting in, the *Leunatig* story arrived, inspired by a Leunig cartoon and his presence in the bar-- I guess. (A spunk as well as bright- mmmm) Judy later generously invited me to guest spot in her guest spot with an improvised piece at a John Luc Ponti concert at the Hordern Pavillion.

Improvisation, so often fun for the doers, is not always so for the audience. However, at the Limerick we had regulars and each week more. Guess our enthusiasm, passion and involvement with the music and with each other was - Catching? Infectious?

China 1983, as part of a Cultural Exchange. The only two performers, apart from a poet, were Graeme Murphy (Sydney Dance Company) and myself. At each school, factory, function we would be announced and we would improvise a performance. One night Graeme was holding forth about dance as the Prime primary art form. Who gives a damn actually?!. But, ironically, at each performance he would call on me to "initiate". Once bird sounds were the starting point - nowhere near as authentic as Christina Johnston, or the birds themselves. At the Beijing National Ballet School, where Graeme gave an improvisation class, there I was - the sound track - racing round the room weaving in and out of the students - while on the sideline a man sat notating the "instant composition". Wish I had that skill and memory. A year or so later, another dancer friend, Kai Tai Chan, founder and director of One Extra Dance Company, was in China. He was asked about the crazy woman who sang and acted the song about the boy who turns into a bird and flies away.

It was in Cuba, 1967, that I was introduced to the decima - as a basis for improvisation. It was in the form of a duel between Nicomedes Santa Cruz, the famous Afro Peruvian poet, and Carlos Puebla, the much loved Cuban singer-songwriter. Both large men - and senior in years (well from my perspective then). Spanish didn't figure at all in my language portfolio. There they were sparring verse for verse. A real argument, a dispute! Carlos had adopted me as my grandfather. They normally seemed such good friends. I was so worried and concerned.

It was part of a tradition - from Spain. There the troubadours sang their poems, structured within the lines of ancient Spanish decimas It's a tradition well and

truly alive. In Puerto Rican decima there are two kinds of troubadour: the one with a melodious voice and good pleasant timbre and the improviser, who can - within the structure of the decima - create verses on the spot on whatever theme he is given, or chooses.

Ivan Perez of Louisiana performs traditional *decimas* of the Canary Islands. He is the recipient of a National Heritage Fellowship and has performed his decimas at Carnegie Hall and the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival. Nothing will ever take away the memory of that first decima day for me. Maybe now Carlos and Nicomedes are both duelling on in the next world.

My favourite "words on improvisation", entertaining and close to the experience of the Limerick Castle, come from Anita O'Day in her biog. "High Times, Hard Times", written with George Elis.

"...Cons had promised us rehearsal time. Last minute decorating made that impossible. Miller didn't need rehearsal except to test the acoustics. He and his men were accustomed to working together. ...I was petrified.

I had 24 minutes to fill and very few tunes to fill that time with - five number!. Forty years later I can only recall three of the titles - 'Jeepers Creepers,' 'Oh, lady, be good!' and 'Blue moon.' On the tunes I knew, I could do five or six different versions of the chorus. I'd begin with the melody and end with the melody and what went on in between depended on what hit me while I was up there singing.

That night I did 'Jeepers Creepers' and the other three tunes. I saved 'Oh, lady be good' as an encore.

At the point where the bridge comes to the second chorus, I needed an idea from somewhere. I saw a polka dot blouse, so I developed that chorus as a bagful of polka dots. To keep the version going, I searched for new ideas. Where was I going to get my inspiration? I looked around the room and that gave me the idea of singing the structure of the room - long wall, short wall, long wall, short wall. That gave the frame for that chorus. I turned to the band - five men - so I put it into a five rhythm. Anything I could get an idea from, I put to work to fill out my time on the stand. I did it that way because technically I was not knowledgeable about music. I needed to get the thought behind the sound going, and I took it from wherever I could find it.

In all, I did 12 choruses of 'Oh, lady, be good!' and when I finished, the place exploded'.....

And then there's Wingy Manone, one armed New Orleans trumpeter... the first person Anita ever heard compare improvising to a horse race. It went something like this:

We're all lined up at the startin' gate. Now we're off. in the first couple of bars, right at the start Wingy's got the lead. I keep the lead for about 12 bars, then the tenor saxophone overtakes me for about 6 bars, then I go back into the lead again for the last 8 bars. We go into another chorus where the trombone takes the lead. I'm behind all the time, on his tail all the time, and in the last chorus I get the lead but the damn piano takes me down and in the last 8 bars of the tag, Wingy takes it over and the winner of the race is - Wingy Malone!

Later, when I got deeply into improvising, that's the way I thought of each number, as a horse race. Only Wingy's race was written out like it had been fixed. When I improvise, I put myself on the line. Sometimes I win, sometimes I lose, sometimes it's too close to call. But I got the basic thought from Wingy.

From 1979 till 1986 Robert Gavin was my accompanist, arranger, partner in crime and lunacy on stage and on the road. With him I came to revalue the role of dynamics - after a long period of working in pubs, i.e. with rock music in pubs. We worked with actual songs, concerts, cabaret, *Piaf the Songs and the Story; For A Dancer* - the show about my mother's life.

As much as I set out to discuss song writers and words in songs- the more words I put to the page the less they refer to this ... song words. Funny that! Is it too difficult? Does it require too much attention to detail? Analysis? Where would I start? Which songs to discuss? The ones familiar to us all. The ones where the words and music are so melded and welded that they stay bound together in our consciousness, even though each could stand on its merits alone. *Strange Fruit; Mercy; The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face; From Little Things; Twisted; Fasten Your Wings With Love; Corazon Al Sur; Alfonsina y el Mar; Shudupa your Face; My Island Home; Imagine; Under My Skin---* Or list by writers: Wow that's a huge list: John Shortis, Bernard Carney, Stephen Sondheim; Ruben Blades, Bruce Cockburn, Daniel Viglietti, Victor Jara, Mario Rojas; Rose Bygrave, Kavisha Mazzella, Cole Porter, Marvin Gaye, Doctor John, Mose Alison, Mic Conway, Joe Dolce, Graham Lowndes, John Ewbank; Michel Emer, Margarite Monnot, Eladia Blazquez, Maria Elena Walsh, Jim Cotter, Mikis Theodorakis. And Bob Dylan - though our ex-P.M. in an in-depth interview, said he found the music superior to the lyrics.

Several months ago I decided I really didn't want to learn more "words". Not just a mature person's memory battle. I wanted to get back to improvising. Even attended a term of improvisation classes - movement and sound

I love good wordsmiths. But music, sound, movement - as a tool of communication for and with people without language, has interested me ever since my dad lost his speech with a stroke, in 1974. It requires a different way of "speaking" and, more than anything, a different way of listening - tuning in. The essential also for good playing- especially improvising.

In the late 80s I researched and wrote a performance piece called *Voxy Lady - The History of Women's Voices & Women's Voices in History*. Or, less academically, *The Vox in the Box & The Box in the Vox*. The text and most of lyrics mine. Music composed and arranged by Jim Cotter, Llew Kiek, Guy Dickerson John Ewbank, Daniel Viglietti, Ian Farr, trad-anon and myself. While writing I came across several stories as to the origin of the word to scat, some of them already known to you. Not this one! I will finish today-- with your help- participation with an abbreviated piece from this show. I was told not to divert from the script - of today's talk and I won't However I do have my instrument with me.

“Once upon a time, and far, far away, and here and now and always, there was, is a woman called Cassandra, Cassie for short. She lives with her two soul sisters, Gaeita and Sirena.

Gaeita of the heart and hearth - nurturer, healer, life giver. Dignified yet shy, guardian of the sacred fire, keeper of the secret songs.

Sirena. (sorceress and magician, songstress and seductress) - half bird, half woman. As dangerous as the devil, but with the voice of an angel. Such was the power of her voice she could lure men to their destruction.

Cassie could foresee disasters. She divines the future through the art of scatomancia. She talks in tongues. Tongues of fire, of passion, of beauty, tongues of tears, blood and kisses. Most people choose not to listen to her.

(Her predictions frighten them; they know she can see. They prefer not to challenge fate.)

Flood, Fire and Famine! Wooden Horses, Metal Phalluses!

Poisonous Vapours, Celestial Mushrooms! Lungs of People, Lungs of Planets

“Hold your tongue, you sound just like your mother” they say.”

“Be a woman. Lay back and enjoy it.-Quietly!-Hush your mouth.”

Damn you! says Cassie.

My vox is in my box My box is in my vox

I come complete or not at all.

Silence is golden? Silence is beholden.

Silence kills. Your comfort is my silence. I will sing!

DAMN YOU!

If you don't sing You don't shit

And if you don't shit-- You die.

Next seated on the loo I sang the aria from Tosca- in Italian, “*Vissi d'arte*” Love & art - these have I lived for.

Well that's better. I'll just sit on it for a while. I always feel so high after a good sing.

Do you like opera? Do you speak Italian?

So you didn't understand that number? I don't think it really matters, actually.

Opera's usually better if you've only a vague idea of what it's about. ...That's why we have no sur-titles here tonight.

Like I said, I feel so high after a good sing. Full of love for myself and the whole world. Cleaned out of accumulated stress and strain. When I don't sing, I feel choked, congested, constipated, lethargic, or in one word lousy.

You on your throne, and me on mine. Flushed with ecstasy on the Seat of Creativity!

Yes, here we all are, all alone and all together. And at this very same moment, in little houses and Opera Houses all over the world, thousands of individuals are eliminating waste from their lives; grunting and sighing, in harmony and discord, to different strains of different melodies.

Trilling and humming

Bebopping as they pooh-plopp

Whistling while they work

Improvising.

The Chinese call it "instant composition".

What a field day for Cassandra! On all these little shit piles she can practice her art. Remember? She can predict the future through the art of Scatomancia. Any Greeks here today?

SKOR, SKATOS--SHIT. MANTEIA--DIVINATION, DIAGNOSIS. So, SCATO-MANCIA--divination or diagnosis by examining excrement.

Divine and diagnose by delving through the dung

Inspecting the intestines of the songs we have sung.

"If you recycle, you may find a solution

If you don't you'll be buried in pollution!"

Scatologically Speaking

SCATA TA SCATA

(Special thanks for input and editing to Susan Jensen, Margret RoadKnight, Edwina Enderby, Paul Coulter, Myra Lambert and Jane Rose.)

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