

## HOLLY HOFMANN

Trying to define the jazz flutist is like trying to define the word jazz. The public's knowledge of the flute as a jazz instrument seems to range between the acquired taste of the avant-garde and the abyss known as pop-jazz. Holly Hofmann clearly defines the jazz flute. Her robust tone is the result of a rich classical background. Critics have labeled Holly the most authoritative, swinging flutist in jazz today. In addition to performing throughout the world, she also composes, conducts clinics and workshops, and books a number of jazz concert series.

Born near Cleveland, Ohio, Holly at five began playing standards with her father, a jazz guitarist. Early exposure to jazz and popular standards would blossom into a love for straight-ahead jazz, but her parents were insistent that she have a solid background in classical technique. When she turned seven her formal education began with lessons with Walter Mayhall and soon thereafter from the first flutist of the Cleveland Orchestra, Maurice Sharp. Holly's music education continued through high school at Interlochen Arts Academy. She graduated with a bachelor's degree from the Cleveland Institute of Music and a master's degree from the University of Northern Colorado. During the summers Holly went to New York to study with Frank Wess and Slide Hampton and began sitting in at jam sessions and learning the necessary jazz standard repertoire. It was their encouragement that convinced her to try to have a career in jazz flute.

After Holly moved from Colorado to San Diego in 1985 she began working with bassist Bob Magnusson and pianist Mike Wofford at the Horton Grand Hotel. Subsequently she booked a four night national jazz program there from 1989-1996, presenting hundreds of jazz artists including Diana Krall, Cassandra Wilson, Tommy Flanagan and Joe Henderson. It was during this time, in the early '90s that she began recording, and formed an important partnership with Los Angeles pianist Bill Cunliffe. The two toured festivals and chamber venues worldwide presenting both jazz and classical compositions in brilliantly seamless arrangements. They recorded *Just Duet, Volume 1 and 2* as well as an organ trio with guitarist Frank Potenza and Duncan Moore, and *Live at Birdland* in a quartet with legendary bassist, Ray Brown and drummer, Victor Lewis.

Holly and Ray began working in New York at the Village Vanguard on a yearly basis in the mid 90s and in 2000, Brown began taking her on tours of the US and Europe as a guest with his trio. She credits Brown's support as one of the major turning points in her career and recalls that each performance with him was a learning experience.

In 2000 Holly married pianist Mike Wofford, often working with him in a quartet setting with Brown, Peter Washington, Jeff Hamilton, Victor Lewis and Ben Riley. Of their 2004 release, *Minor Miracle*, George Carroll of Jazzreview.com writes, “virtual torrents of fresh, rhythmically and harmonically inventive ideas and melodies...The epitome of bebop.” Holly and Mike also toured and recorded with Flutology, an all-star sextet, featuring Frank Wess, Ali Ryerson and Hofmann on flutes with Wofford, Washington and Lewis. Norm Weinstein of *All About Jazz* called Flutology’s performance in New York “singular and breathtaking.”

In addition to long associations with Bill Cunliffe, Frank Wess and Mike Wofford, she has worked with Slide Hampton, Houston Person, Mundell Lowe, James Moody, Cedar Walton, Kenny Barron, Ken Peplowski, John Clayton, Bud Shank, Chuck Redd, Kevin Mahogany and Regina Carter, among many others.

Currently residing in San Diego, Holly books or consults on several jazz parties and festivals including Jazz at Newport in Oregon, and Jazz in the City at the State Theater in New Brunswick, New Jersey. She and Mike have enjoyed a long association with the Athenaeum Music and Arts Library in La Jolla, CA where they have recorded live twice, most recently their first CD as a duo, *Live at the Athenaeum, Volume 2* on Capri Records. The new CD was released in 2007 and features Holly’s first recorded performance on alto flute. She chose to record this project live with no amplification or effects, as if the listener was there in the front row.

With ten recordings as a leader in the duo or quartet setting, Holly is working on recording her Tribute to Antonio Carlos Jobim with Brazilian rhythm section and string orchestra, a configuration she’s taking this year to California, Arizona, Salt Lake City, France and New Zealand. She and Mike are also putting the finishing touches on another jazz quartet with string orchestra project of all Ellington/Strayhorn compositions.

Taking the flute out of its stereotypical role has always been Holly’s main objective. Audiences and promoters alike are recognizing her as one of the premiere jazz flutists in the country. Phil Woods, while describing her performance at the Telluride Jazz Festival, said “Along with Hubert Laws, Holly is frankly the best jazz flute player today.” She has become the standard by which the flute is being judged.

Tom Burns  
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