



Our Twenty-ninth Season

Our One Hundred Eighty- Fourth Program  
2007-2008

**DECADES OF SONGS IN HER HEART:  
SHEILA JORDAN**

Sponsored by the Department of Music and the  
New Hampshire Library of Traditional Jazz

**8 p.m. Monday, October 15, 2007  
Johnson Theatre, Paul Creative Arts Center, Durham, NH**

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## THE ARTISTS

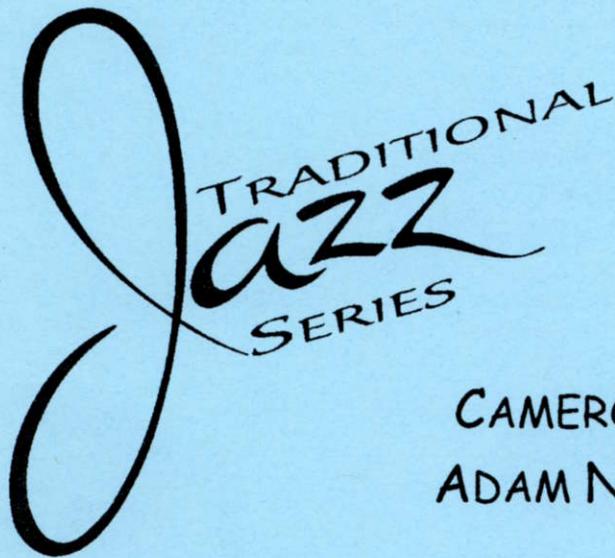
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### Sheila Jordan and Company

One of the most provocative and enduring controversies in the entire history of music has to do with the relationship between voices and instruments, typified by such anomalous attempts at undefilement as churches banning the use of instruments within their hallowed halls, and musician's unions refusing to accept singers. Certainly the first "musical" sounds were vocal, if not textual or intentionally aesthetic—and the first non-vocal performer was doubtless a percussionist, if not knowledgeably so! Moving along a few millennia we encounter such phenomena as singers executing numerous notes to a single syllable (as in idioms as distinct as Gregorian chant and Baroque arias) which clearly draw the listener more to the voice as "instrument" rather than as conveyer of text. And when we hear instruments themselves purveying similar passages we wonder if we are confronted with a "chicken and egg" situation!

Having thusly muddied the sonic waters we nonetheless might conclude that despite arguments to the contrary the human voice is fundamentally an instrument, and its capacity to express text could be considered a gloriously fortuitous bonus. At any rate, the centuries may have provided more antecedents (however remote) of such things as scat singing than we have led ourselves to believe. And as the distinguished writer Albert Murray has opined in reference to Bessie Smith sometimes having learned lyrics inaccurately, "But who really cared?. Because...when the singer sounds good enough, the words don't have to make any sense at all....The essential message is usually conveyed by the music, whether vocal or instrumental." (He might have added "with all due respect to lyricists!")

No-one has covered more ground in exploring the full range of vocal possibilities than has Sheila Jordan. Growing up first in the rural mining country of Pennsylvania and later in racially volatile Detroit she was early exposed to a variety of disparate idioms, especially since this was at the time when Charlie Parker and his contemporaries were influencing so many young jazz players. Sheila was particularly moved by this music, and by instrumentalists more than vocalists. She was indeed touched by the significant jazz and blues singers of her youth, from Mildred Bailey through Billie Holiday to Sarah Vaughan, but soon decided that the properties of her own voice, imagination, and remarkable ear encouraged a more comprehensive approach, where the stylistic character of improvised instrumental solos was absorbed into the more traditional palate of vocal colors and poetic expression. By mid-century she had permanently embraced the jazz activity of New York and was associating with such luminaries as Charles Mingus and Lennie Tristano. Through all of the subsequent decades of coping with the changing fortunes so endemic to the life of the jazz artist in that complex scene, she has maintained her enthusiasm, imagination, and integrity, with a special capacity to inspire young singers to develop their individual identities through that most personal and marvelous of instruments, the human voice.



SHEILA JORDAN  
VOCALIST

CAMERON BROWN, BASS  
ADAM NUSSBAUM, DRUMS  
&  
DAVE BALLOU, TRUMPET

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In the interest of full disclosure we acknowledge (with unabashed pride) that Dave Ballou did his graduate work here at UNH. A Berklee alumnus as well, he toured with both the Tommy Dorsey orchestra under Buddy Morrow, and the Woody Herman aggregation led by Frank Tiberi, and claims as mentors our colleague Dr. Clark Terry and our recently departed friend Herb Pomeroy. Dave is now director of jazz studies at Towson University in Maryland, and the April, 2006 issue of *Cadence* features a front page interview with him.

Sheila is noted for working minus chordal support—in fact her classic duo album with bassist Harvie Swartz was recorded 25 years ago this very day—and it takes particularly sensitive associates to complete the unusual musical picture; none are better than Cameron Brown and Adam Nussbaum.

One insightful reviewer says of Sheila Jordan's style, "She doesn't so much sing songs as melt them like candles." And some time ago Sheila herself stated, "I don't even know if I would be alive today if it wasn't for the music—living it every day and protecting it from being false." Right on, as our generation used to say.

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*Tape recorders and cameras are not permitted due to contractual arrangements.  
Please turn off beepers and watch alarms. Your cooperation is requested.*

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## THE SERIES

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The UNH Traditional Jazz Series began in 1979 through the imaginative vision and generous commitment of the late Dorothy C. Prescott. It promotes the enjoyment and understanding of the art through concerts featuring musicians of regional, national, and international prominence. The program represents a unique endeavor to expand interest and honor outstanding talent and achievement.

Musicians wishing to do so are encouraged to offer their recordings for sale or mail order during intermission; a brief announcement may be made. The sponsors have no financial interest in such sales beyond offering a courtesy service to the artists and the public.

*Program Notes -- Paul Verrette*

*Production -- David Seiler*

*Program essays from the entire UNH Traditional Jazz Series now can be accessed on the internet.*

*<http://www.izaak.unh.edu/nhltj>*

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## 2007-2008 SCHEDULE

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- September 17:** For Lionel, Red, and Bunny: The Ed Polcer Sextet  
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- October 15:** Decades of Songs in Her Heart: Sheila Jordan  
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- November 19:** Youthful Vibrations: Stefon Harris and Blackout  
♦
- February 4:** Luminous Rays of Pianistic Elegance: Tim Ray  
♦
- March 10:** Great Scott!: The Multidimensional Mr. Robinson and His Colleagues  
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- April 14:** Rediscovered Jewels: Onyx Club Sextet Led by Wayne Roberts

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## OTHER SPECIAL JAZZ PERFORMANCES AND EVENTS

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- October 26:** *Family Weekend Concert, UNH JAZZ BAND and COMBOS, Dave Seiler and Thomas Palance, directing. Strafford Room, Memorial Union Building, UNH.*  
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- January 22:** *Harry Jones Memorial Concert with the Seacoast Big Band, Dave Seiler, directing with special guest, composer/trombonist John Fedchock. Johnson Theatre, Paul Creative Arts Center, UNH.*  
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- January 30:** *Faculty Jazz Sextet. Johnson Theatre, PCAC. Free and open to the public.*  
♦
- March 16:** *Gala Jazz Concert, DR. CLARK TERRY, trumpet and flugelhorn, and his "Real" Clark Terry Quintet, with Stantawn Kendrick, saxophones, Don Friedman, piano, Marcus McLaurine, bass, and Sylvia Cuenca, drums. Johnson Theatre, Paul Creative Arts Center, UNH.*

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*For tickets call (603)862-2290*