

HELEN

Sung



Biography

Jazz pianist Helen Sung and her trio took a capacity Fontana Chamber Arts crowd for a ride that patrons won't soon forget. Sung let listeners into her world: a place of passion, adventure and drama bound by even and odd musical notes and truckloads of rhythm. —Alex Nixon, **Kalamazoo Gazette**

Winner of the Kennedy Center's 2007 Mary Lou Williams Piano Competition, pianist **Helen Sung** has been called "one of the brightest emerging stars in jazz today." As an Asian-American artist and composer, she challenges stereotypes with a compelling, unique voice informed by her virtuosity in classical, jazz, & popular music.

Her CD *Helenistique* was praised as "...one of the year's most exciting listens." (**JazzTimes**), and her latest release *Sunbird after Albéniz*, a jazz-classical adventure, is being hailed "a real winner" (**All About Jazz**), a "seamless recording in which one composer's contributions complement the other's." (**Billboard**). Most recently, her project *NuGenerations* toured southern Africa (Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Namibia, & South Africa) as a **2009 US State Department-Rhythm Road: American Music Abroad** ensemble.

A native of Houston, Texas, Sung attended Houston's High School for the Performing and Visual Arts (**HSPVA**). She initially aspired to be a classical pianist but was bitten by the jazz bug (specifically by Tommy Flanagan's solo on Charlie Parker's *Confirmation*) while studying at the University of Texas at Austin. She switched to jazz and was soon after accepted into the inaugural class of the **Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz Performance** (at Boston's New England Conservatory of Music).

An intensive program accepting only seven students (forming a jazz septet), the Institute proved to be an unprecedented opportunity to study & perform with some of the greatest masters of jazz music: **Clark Terry, Wynton Marsalis, Jimmy Heath, Jackie McLean, Bobby Watson, Harry "Sweets" Edison, James Moody, Ron Carter** (artistic director of the program), **Barry Harris, David Baker, Slide Hampton, Lewis Nash, Jon Faddis, Curtis Fuller, Albert "Tootie" Heath, Bennie Maupin, and Sir Roland Hanna**. They performed at the Kennedy Center, and toured India and Thailand with **Herbie Hancock** and **Wayne Shorter**. Personal highlights of Sung's time in Boston include presenting a jazz workshop with the late, acclaimed bassist **Ray Brown**, performing at the **Tanglewood Jazz Festival**, and feature television spots.

Sung presently lives in New York City, and has gone on to work with Clark Terry, Slide Hampton, Ron Carter, Jon Faddis, Wayne Shorter, **Steve Turre, T.S.Monk, and MacArthur Fellow Regina Carter**. She frequently appears with the **Mingus Big Band** and is a member of Clark Terry's "Big Badd" Big Band. She was also a featured performer on PBS' *In Performance at the White House* for the Monk Institute's 20th Anniversary Celebration.

As bandleader, Sung has performed on **Marian McPartland's** acclaimed **Piano Jazz** show, NPR's *JazzSet* w/Dee Dee Bridgewater, and XM Radio's *In the Swing Seat* w/Wynton Marsalis. Sung has feature print pieces in such publications as **Keyboard, Downbeat, JazzTimes, Jazziz, and AllAboutJazz**. Her band has headlined at the Fontana Chamber Arts Summer Festival, **Kalisz International Jazz Piano Festival**, the Kennedy Center's **Mary Lou Williams Jazz Festival**, Clifford Brown Jazz Festival, Vermont Mozart Festival, Jazz Lucca Donna Festival (Italy), Tri-C Jazz Festival (Cleveland), Jazz Festival Bern, the American Jazz Museum's 'Blue Room,' The Philadelphia Museum of Art, and New York City's finest jazz venues.

Her experience at the Monk Institute inspires her to remain involved with music education by working with arts education organizations (such as **JazzReach**) and conducting workshops & clinics. Sung was a recipient of a **Chamber Music America/Doris Duke Foundation Grant** enabling her quartet to conduct a jazz residency program for underserved youth in Camden, NJ.