



## March 2009

By David Adler

### Helen Sung and Ron Carter

Helen Sung and Ron Carter  
Rubin Museum  
New York City, February 6, 2009

To hear pianist Helen Sung and bassist Ron Carter in a duo setting at the Rubin Museum (Feb.6th), in a small theater with no amplification, will surely rank as one of this year's highlights. Carter is of course a legend (it so happened that Dan Ouellette's new Carter biography, *Finding the Right Notes*, came hot off the presses in time for the event). And while Sung may be Carter's gifted former student, here the two met as equals and swung the room, anchored in a spirit of play and risk. The popping, drum-like roundness of Carter's every note enabled them to deal with the hazardous rhythmic demands of Sung's "The Waiting Game" and "Hope Springs Eternal" and Carter's famous "RJ," although with his diving glissandos and virtuosic asides, Carter did far more than keep time. The set began with Monk's "Erone!" arranged as a flowing waltz, ended with a brisk, multi-key "In Walked Bud" and also included Carter's gems "Opus 1.5" and "First Trip." But the centerpiece was a new suite by Sung, inspired by female deities from the Rubin's collection of Himalayan art. Pictures of flame-encircled goddesses shone on a screen overhead as the duo progressed from abstraction ("Joyful Noise") to intricate swing ("The Professor"), from minor-key lyricism ("Clarity") to a blistering conclusion ("Meeting of the Minds"). Billy Strayhorn's "Lotus Blossom" served as a coda, echoing the projected image of a serene figure in bronze—seated, naturally, in lotus position.



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Review: **Helen Sung Trio puts on unforgettable Fontana Show** –Alex Nixon (July 2009)

*Jazz pianist Helen Sung and her trio took a capacity Fontana Chamber Arts crowd for a ride Friday Night at the Nature Center that patrons soon won't 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. (excerpt)*

## The New York Times

September 23, 2007

PLAYLIST

### Dark, Quiet Bebop and Folkish Metal

By BEN RATLIFF

Helen Sung

Ms. Sung, a New York pianist, was formed by a classical background and matured by 10 years of studying and playing jazz. On "Sungbird" (Sunnyside) she has found a way to make those two sides produce a beneficial tension. The line running through the record is "España, Op. 16," a beautiful six-part suite for solo piano written in 1890 by the Spanish composer Isaac Albéniz that draws on rhythms and phrases from Andalusian folk music. She alternates parts of the suite with adaptations of the same parts for jazz quartet, varying hugely in their strategies. It's a little like a homework assignment, but her skill as a pianist and the beauty of her source material make it appealing.