

Connie Crothers, improvising pianist

BIOGRAPHY



CONNIE CROTHERS has expressed her musical life as performer, recording artist and teacher releasing feeling--her source--through spontaneous improvisation.

Five recordings have been produced in 2012. A 4-CD box set, duo with pianist David Arner, "Spontaneous Suites for Two Pianos," was released this year on the RogueArt label. Grego Applegate Edwards writes: "It is one of the finest improvisational solo-pianistic moments we have experienced in recorded form to date."

It will repay your attention with an enthralling sublimity." A duet recording with alto saxophonist Jemeel Moondoc, "Two," has been issued by the Relative Pitch label. She performed with Moondoc, bassist Henry Grimes and drummer Chad Taylor at The Stone, also a trio performance with Grimes and Moondoc and a duet with Grimes at The Stone in New York City; She has performed with Moondoc at Hallwalls in Buffalo, Tonic in NYC and at the Vision Festival in a quintet which included trumpet player Nathan Breedlove, bassist Adam Lane and drummer John McCutcheon. TranceFormation, a trio, with singer Andrea Wolper and bassist Ken Filiano, released selections from two live performances on "TranceFormation in Concert." She accompanies singer Alexis Parsons on "Hippin'" Poet Paula Hackett and Connie collaborate on a poetry/improvised piano duo CD, "Sharing the Thrill." These last three CDs are on New Artists.

Four CDs were produced in 2011. Two of them feature her quartet—with Richard Tabnik on alto saxophone, Roger Mancuso on drums, Filiano on bass—with poet Mark Weber, "Live at The Stone, NYC," and with trumpet player Roy Campbell, "Band of Fire," New Artists label. Tabnik is also on one track of another recording, with percussionist Kevin Norton, "Kingston Tone Roads," on New Vanguard, division of Deep Listening Space. A duo CD with clarinet player Bill Payne, "The Stone Set," is a 2-CD release, one CD from a performance at The Stone and the other CD a re-release of their first recording, "Conversations." This was chosen for Ken Waxman's best of the year list in The New York City Jazz Record. Bill Shoemaker and Art Lange had selected "Conversations" for their best of the year lists when it was released originally.

In June, 2011, the quartet performed at the Vision Festival in New York City. Writing about the set in Jazz Inside, Ken Weiss described this set as "the highlight of the Festival."

The Mutable label released "Session at 475 Kent," a duo with bassist Michael Bisio, in 2010. This CD placed on three best 10 records of the year lists, Grego Edwards and Jason Bivins in Cadence, and Tim DuRoche in Jazz Journalists Association.

In October, 2009, she performed duo with Bisio at Location One, presented by Roulette, in New York City. In January 2007, her quartet released a CD, "Music is a Place," New Artists, with Ratzon Harris on bass. It was chosen by Stuart Broomer and Bill Shoemaker for their lists of the top ten recordings of the year; it received an honorable mention for best CDs of the year in All About Jazz/New York. In December, 2009, Howard Mandel chose this record for his best of the year list, in a listening category.

Connie Crothers, improvising pianist

BIOGRAPHY

The band's two CDs, "Ontology" and "Live, Outpost Performance Space," with poet Mark Weber, New Artists, received critical acclaim. She has performed with her quartet at the The Stone, JVC Jazz Festival and in Birdland, Small's, Clemente Solo Velez, Rhythm in the Kitchen, Cooler in the Shade in New York City, Cultural Center in Ekaterinburg, Russia, Fasching in Stockholm and Town Hall in Tallin, Estonia (with guitarist Andy Fite and bassist Ulf Ackerhielm), Outpost Performance Space in Albuquerque, NM.

Crothers curated The Stone in September, 2009. This curation was selected by Time Out magazine for a preview, getting the #2 spot for best live performance in New York City.

She has performed extensively as a soloist. In 2011, she performed solo in San Francisco, CA, Bay City, MI, Chicago, IL and in Paris. She appeared solo in the 2008 Vision Festival, the only solo set in the Festival that year. Ken Weiss wrote in Cadence that her set was one of the best three sets of the Festival. She was presented as a soloist by the Interpretations Series at Merkin Hall in 2006, New York City, also performing a duet with Roscoe Mitchell in that concert; she performed at the Northampton Center for the Arts in the "World of Piano" series. Deep Listening Space in Kingston, NY. She has performed solo in festivals such as Berlin Jazztage, Jazz at Middleheim in Belgium, DuMaurier International Festival in Toronto, New Music America Festival, "Piano Nights" Festival in St. Augustine. Lennie Tristano produced her in three solo concerts in Carnegie Recital Hall, a fourth was produced by the Lennie Tristano Jazz Foundation, produced by Jazz Records on a 2-lp set, "Solo." John Sutherland chose her solo recording, "Music from Everyday Life," for his list of the best ten recordings of the year in Coda.

She appeared in performance with percussionist Kevin Norton at Location One and Cornelia Street, NYC; Middletown, CT, and in Kingston, NY. In 2011, she performed with poet Paula Hackett in San Francisco. She performed duo with electroacoustic improviser Ben Manley at Location One.

Crothers recorded duo with Max Roach as part of his historic duets recording project--"Swish," New Artists--and performed duo with Roach in Tokyo, Bologna, New Orleans and at the Brooklyn Academy of Music with the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company. Roach and Crothers were honored by Harvard University as Visiting Jazz Artists; during the ceremony they performed with the Harvard University Band. For this concert, Anthony Braxton wrote a composition for them.

She co-led an engagement at the Village Vanguard with Warne Marsh, in a quartet featuring bassist Eddie Gomez and drummer Peter Scattaretico. She performed with Marsh, with Roger Mancuso and bassist Joe Solomon in Carnegie Recital Hall.

"Love Energy," New Artists, a quartet CD co-led by Lenny Popkin and featuring Carol Tristano and Cameron Brown, was chosen #1 record of the year by Jack Cooke in Wire. Another release from this quartet, "In Motion," was selected for the best 50 records of the year by the French magazine, Jazz Magazine. This quartet appeared at the Blue Note, Sweet Basil and Birdland in New York City, De Singel, De Werf and L'Archeduc in Belgium, Bimhuis in Amsterdam, the Toronto International Jazz Festival, Ottawa Jazz Festival, the Lennie Tristano Club in Aversa, Italy, Spoleto Festival in Charleston, NC.

continued

Connie Crothers, improvising pianist

When her first record, "Perception," originally on SteepleChase, was reissued in 1983 on Inner City, it was selected as one of the ten best records of the year by Mark Weber in Coda. When it was reissued in 1986, Patrick Williams chose it for record of the month in Jazz Magazine. When it was reissued in 1995, Claude Colpaert selected it as record of the month in Jazz Hot. Her duet recording with Richard Tabnik, "Duo Dimension," was selected by Lois Moody for her year's ten best list in Ottawa Citizen.

Feature articles have appeared in Jazz Inside, Knack (Belgium), Jazz Podium (Germany), Cadence, The Village Voice, All About Jazz New York.

She was a guest on Marian McPartland's radio show "Piano Jazz." She was honored by the Jazz Museum in Harlem by being featured in their series "Harlem Speaks."

In the centennial issue of Cadence, Crothers was selected for the list of the most important and influential musicians in the last twenty-five years of the 20th century.

Lennie Tristano wrote, for her first record, "Perception": "Connie Crothers is the most original musician it has ever been my privilege to work with."

Connie Crothers, improvising pianist

QUOTES

“Connie Crothers scored the festival’s lone solo gig, mixing in a noble grace, oblique angles and uncompromising ferocity into her piano work. Her use of space, sensitivity and bursts of energy filled with felicitous detail was astounding. It’s difficult to say if the most memorable element of her glorious set was the virtuosity with which she played or the taken aback joy with which she radiated while soaking up her well-earned rousing applause.”

Ken Weiss. Jazz Improv/New York, December 2008
Review, solo set, Vision Festival, 2008

“Crothers is a stunning pianist.”

Stuart Broomer, *Signal to Noise*

“...a lioness on the keyboard.”

Jean Quist, *Jazz Nu*

“Crothers’s status (is) one of the most accomplished in/out improvisers.”

Chris Kelly, www.jazz.com

“. . .a powerful two-handed style, percussive and explorative. Her sudden descent to a crystal-toned delicacy permits the lyrical aspects to blossom with awe-inspiring beauty. . . a study in mood shifts, ranging from deep foreboding to a spirited explosion of joy.”

John Sutherland, *Coda*

“The music of Connie Crothers, giving a musical coherence that transcends the distinction between personal compositions and standards, causes the listener to experience a captivating joy.”

Patrick Williams, *Jazz Magazine* (France)

Connie Crothers, improvising pianist
QUOTES

“(Her music), played with intensity and an obvious outpouring of emotion, results in substantive music with power framed in a veil of tenderness.”

Frank Rubolino, *One Final Note*

“Connie Crothers has forged a truly individual path in music.”

Francis Lo Kee, allaboutjazz.com

“Her work continues to demonstrate the singularity of her voice. She’s one of those pianists whom you can recognize in a few phrases, and she’s always got something to say.”

Michael Coyle, *Cadence*

“Connie’s (playing) has a certain elegance and sophistication that puts her in a class by itself; she sounds like no one else but herself. (She) is one of the most gifted pianists around.”

Bruce Gallanter, *Downtown Music Gallery Newsletter*

“About the only predictable elements in the work of pianist/composer Crothers are honesty and originality.”

Lois Moody, *Jazz News*

“Connie Crothers is the most original musician it has ever been my privilege to work with.”

Lennie Tristano, liner notes for “Perception,” SteepleChase Records

about the solo set at the Vision Festival, 2008:

“...thrillingly expressionistic.”

John Sharpe, allaboutjazz.com

Connie Crothers, improvising pianist

REVIEWS

Connie Crothers - Solo Set at the Vision Festival - June 13, 2008

By John Sharpe

Having heard pianist Connie Crothers discussing Lennie Tristano and Dizzy Gillespie with Phil Schaap on WKCR earlier in the week, I was expecting her Vision set to be a more traditional recital. But Crothers began by stating how inspirational she found the Vision Festival, and she certainly did seem inspired. Despite a serene look on her face, she pitched a stabbing left hand against dark rumblings in her right in the first of four thrillingly expressionistic, freely improvised pieces. Sadly her set was cut short, with MC Lewis Barnes even asking the audience if they wanted more after the third piece. When answered with a resounding yes, Crothers responded with a forearm smash on the keyboard, then used the flats and heel of her hands to pound the registers, before morphing into measured chords contrasted with an extemporized bluesy line. Finishing with a series of karate chops up and down the keyboard, Crothers received an affectionate standing ovation for her all too brief appearance.

All About Jazz, August 2008

MUSIC FROM EVERYDAY LIFE - Connie Crothers, solo piano

By Frank Rubolino

The piano style of Connie Crothers is replete with rich textural phrasing and an ability to dissect a composition to expose its barest roots. Crothers has been an adept pursuer of creativity since the 1960s when she studied under Lennie Tristano and thereafter began performing publicly in the New York area. Her playing is filled with depth and density, hinting at a somber, seemingly brooding persona, which in reality is counter indicative of her true character. This perception is particularly suggested on the solo album *Music from Everyday Life*. While the title might imply a lighthearted romp, it is anything but that. The songs unfold in heavy layers of sound that cascade from her piano with abundant resonance. Her program of original and standard material is an announced statement of personal, subjective choice, and it is played with intensity and an obvious outpouring of emotion. While one would expect her own compositions to be freeform vehicles, I was surprised and impressed by the way Crothers approached the standards. Songs such as "Lover Man", "Star Eyes", and "How High the Moon" are played with such originality that the melody lines are fully submerged under her interpretive direction. She projects the essence of the songs without ever having to make overt statement on the theme. Only on the opening segment of "Good Morning Heartache" does even the slightest hint of the theme surface. This subtlety indicates an ability to hear far beyond the superficial level of melody. Crothers makes heavy use of the lower end of the register in probing the labyrinth she designs inside the songs. Her right hand adds the sparkling relief, but the most meaningful statements are derived from the bottom end of the sound spectrum. The tunes are the essence of full-bodied articulation, and her exploratory endeavor results in substantive music with power framed in a veil of tenderness.

www.onefinalnote.com, September 2001

Music from *Everyday Life* was chosen by John Sutherland for his list of the ten best recordings of 2001 in *CODA Magazine*

Connie Crothers, improvising pianist

REVIEWS

CONCERT AT COOPER UNION

Connie Crothers, solo piano, NA1002

By John Sutherland

Connie Crothers' 1984 solo concert is a totally different experience. From the opening piece, Carol's Dream, dedicated to Carol Tristano, the pianist's powerful two-handed style, percussive and explorative, is evident. In her treatment of standards, initial melodic lines are soon dispersed in heavy chordal patterning (All the Things You Are), in fragments of melody (You'd Be So Nice to Come Home to), or into a Cecil Taylor other-worldliness (What is this Thing Called Love). Yet with the Rodgers-Hart I Didn't Know what Time It Was, her sudden descent to a crystal-toned delicacy permits the lyrical aspects to blossom with awe-inspiring beauty. Her closing Trilogy is a study in mood shifts, ranging from deep foreboding to a spirited explosion of joy. There is a deliberate perversity, a controlled angularity, an intellectual intensity about everything she plays; if she swings, it's to her own inner sense of rhythm. All this can both challenge and fascinate the listener. It takes us a long way from a McShann or a Grappelli. But then jazz isn't a traveller with the past strapped firmly to its back. It seeks new vistas, new means of expressing its response to such changes. That's what makes it so interesting and rewarding.

CODA Magazine, November 1, 1992



photo by Marlise Momber

[click to download high resolution version](#)

Connie Crothers, Improvising Pianist
475 Kent Avenue #410 Brooklyn, NY 11211 718.302.4377
www.conniecrothers.net connie@conniecrothers.net



photo by Elodie Saracco

[click to download high resolution version](#)

Connie Crothers, Improvising Pianist
475 Kent Avenue #410 Brooklyn, NY 11211 718.302.4377
www.conniecrothers.net connie@conniecrothers.net



photo by Ken Weiss

[click to download high resolution version](#)

Connie Crothers, Improvising Pianist
475 Kent Avenue #410 Brooklyn, NY 11211 718.302.4377
www.conniecrothers.net connie@conniecrothers.net



photo by Peter Gannushkin

for a high resolution version of this photo,
please contact the photographer directly:
downtownmusic.net

Connie Crothers, Improvising Pianist
475 Kent Avenue #410 Brooklyn, NY 11211 718.302.4377
www.conniecrothers.net connie@conniecrothers.net