

“This steamy-voiced artist captured the audience from her first step on the stage and held them until the lights went up after her encore”

The M.U.S.E. Memorial University, St. John's

Mary Barry: Original Jazz, Blues, and Chanson

Most jazz singers sing “standards”— those great tunes written by genius wordsmiths including Cole Porter, Rogers and Hart, or Johnny Mercer. It worked for Ella and works today for Diana. Blues singers tend to immerse themselves in the

creations of several generations of Afro-American writers from Ma Rainey to Robert Cray. Those who embrace chanson work the B's – Brel, Brassens, and Boris Vian. Mary Barry follows a different path, writing original songs in all three genres that are so good they sound like standards. Sometimes you really have

to look at the composer credits to confirm that the song that reduced you to a puddle of emotion was written by the same person you hear singing it. The ability to both write and interpret is a rare talent outside the rock and folk worlds. Even more compelling is her ability to create magic on stage. Mary Barry has spent a quarter of a century refining her skills and the result has won her a dedicated coterie of fans among discerning listeners from coast to coast.

An evening with Mary Barry unfolds like a story: there's a beginning, a middle, and, just when you think you've figured out the plot, a surprise twist. It finishes with all the loose ends tied up. The audience leaves with the satisfied feeling that the story has been well and truly told. The show has a flow to it, moving easily through blues and ballads, swing and bossa nova, all originals. There are a few covers—a blues medley of

Key to the Highway/Centrepiece/Twisted or a “chanson classique”, perhaps **Les Feuilles Mortes/Autumn Leaves**, done in both French and English. An encore might feature a chorus or two of **Danny Boy** or even an Italian operatic aria **O Cessate di Piagarmi**. If you are lucky and the mood strikes her, Mary will bring on her puppet companion, Hanna Banana, to perform **Fish and Chips** with its deathless chorus – “greasy fingers and greasy lips”.

Most of the songs, however, are Mary's own take on the world. **January**, which won her a songwriting award, uses winter as a metaphor for lost love. **Basse Ville** chronicles the old town of Quebec City the tourists don't see, where poverty lurks behind the picturesque. **Never Never** recounts a tale of unrequited love while **Another Time** remembers a love that was once required. **Pourquoi c'est comme ca?** is an existential question from a writer who shares a birthday with Kierkegaard, Marx, and Mohammed. **Looking for a Genie in the Bottom of a Bottle** counsels against “seeking the answer in the bottom of that decanter”. Over the course of an evening, Mary Barry explores life with all its joys, sorrows and absurdities. Carrying out the true task of the artist, she takes your experiences and reflects them back to you in the form of cleverly crafted, articulate songs.

Whether as a solo artist accompanying herself on piano, or in duo, trio, quartet, or quintet formation what remains constant is the voice and the vision; the unique art of Mary Barry.



“I consider myself a tough judge of vocal jazz . . . I consider Mary Barry quite remarkable and want to hear much more from her”

*Ross MacLean,
Broadcast Week*

“. . . une voix chaude, trainante, et sensuelle”

Le soleil