



Janice Jackson – The Complete Biography

Soprano Janice Jackson was born on Cape Breton Island (Nova Scotia, Canada) and graduated from the University of Victoria (Canada) in 1986 with her Bachelor of Music in Performance. She continued her studies at the Utrecht Conservatory (Netherlands), where she received her

Performance Diploma in 1990 with a Commendation for her interpretation of 20 century music. While at the University of Victoria, Jackson twice received the St. Jude Vocal Scholarship and the President's Academic Scholarship. Her studies in the Netherlands were supported by a Universities and Colleges of Canada Bursary and a Nova Scotia Talent Trust award.

Since graduation, Jackson has been in great demand as an interpreter of modern music. In addition to concerts in the Netherlands, Canada, the United States, France, Italy, Germany, Austria, Norway, Belgium, China, and South Africa, she has sung in modern music festivals throughout Europe and Canada – the November Festival (Ghent), Wien Modern (Vienna), Ludwigs Lust (Hamburg), The Proms (Amsterdam), IRCAM (Paris), Big Torino 2000 (Turin), Diem Festival of Electroacoustic Music (Århus, Denmark), Sound Symposium (Newfoundland), Canada's Scotia Festival of Music.

Many contemporary composers who write for the voice favour Jackson to showcase their works. Since 1988, she has sung over 130 world premieres, including many composed specifically for her by composers such as Theo Abazis (Greece), Emily Doolittle (Canada), Alice Ping Yee Ho (Canada), Wende Bartley (Canada), John Rea (Canada), Roger Marsh (England), and Margriet Ehlen (Holland). Above all else, Jackson is a musical adventurer, exploring a wide range of musical styles, from cutting edge new music to traditional opera. She performed with several Dutch opera companies including The Summer

Opera, Opera Forum, and the Netherlands Dance Theatre. Her roles included Suzanna in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Adele in *Die Fledermaus*, and La Princess/Le Feu in *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges*.

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Jackson's repertoire includes some of the most demanding music of the 20 century, from Berio, Cage, and Nono to Schönberg, Webern, and Dallapiccola. However, she is also a lover of cabaret, tango, and jazz standards. Her "Classical Cabaret" programs include songs by Arnold Schönberg and Benjamin Britten, Eric Satie's music hall songs, Kurt Weill songs from Berlin and America, Louis Andriessen's *Four Beatles' Songs* (written for Cathy Berberian in a classical style), George Gershwin, Cole Porter, and more.

Her concert programs often combine elements of mime, theatre, the obscure, and the absurd, and she likes to surprise audiences with a musical mélange ranging from operatic arias to Scottish folk songs, occasionally throwing in unexpected elements such as Cathy Berberian's humorous *Stripsody* (improvisations based on comic strips) or a tragic Piazzolla tango.

Jackson has been and continues to be a member of several modern music ensembles. She has sung numerous pieces with the Schreck Ensemble for Electroacoustic Music (Amsterdam), including Luigi Nono's famous *La Fabbrica Illuminata*. She is a member of the Upstream Orchestra (Halifax, Canada), a 22 piece group which blends improvisation with composed music. She was a co-founder of the Noir Angels Quartet (Halifax) which combined improvisation with cabaret songs.

She has been a frequent guest artist with other modern music ensembles in Canada and the Netherlands, including Array Music (Toronto), The New Ensemble (Amsterdam), The Basho Ensemble (Utrecht), The Interval Chamber for Microtonal Music (Amsterdam), Dubbel Quintessence (Amsterdam), The Matty Niel Consort (Maastricht), and the improvisation group Utrecht Deep Artment. The latter is an eight-member band that tours extensively in the Netherlands; it released its *Serenians* CD, featuring vocals by Jackson, in 1998.

Scores are not always necessary for a Janice Jackson performance. Her free improvisation work includes collaborations with Barry Guy, Utrecht Deep Artment, Paul Cram's Upstream Orchestra and Guerrilla Orchestra, the Noir Angels Quartet, and the Canadian Electronic Ensemble and Innerworkings, her new trio Innerworkings with fiddle player/composer Rose Bolton and double bassist/composer Lukas Pearse.

Jackson has made numerous recordings with Dutch radio stations (NCRV World Radio, The Concert Sender, and Classical Radio 4) and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. She can also be heard on several CDs, including *Blue Age* by Dutch "new age" composer Coen Bais, *Serenians* by Utrecht Deep Artment, and *Import* by the Escher Ensemble.

She has also performed music for film and television, including a short film by Lulu Keating (Canada) titled *Inside Out* and a score by Sandy Moore (Canada) for the television series *Chasing Cain*.

Over the years, there have been many exciting concerts, performances, festivals, events and recordings.

In 1995, Jackson sang the world premiere of *Orpheus* with the Stuttgart State Ballet, a work for soprano and orchestra by Greek composer Theo Abazis. Two years later, she premiered *Travelings*, a touring program of five solo pieces, each written for her by a different composer, each based on the ancient classical music of a different country – France, Netherlands, India, Japan, and Byzantium.

Her solo concert *Out There and Beyond* (2000-2001) included everything from spectacular vocal acrobatics to pure theatre, leading to her debut at Toronto's Music Gallery (2001) after which she was immediately asked to return for the 2001-2002 season. Her second concert at the Music Gallery, consisting of electro-acoustic works by French composer Jean Claude Risset, was recorded for *Two New Hours*, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's weekly new music radio show.

During the 2001-02 season, Jackson was also Musician in Residence with the St. Cecilia Concert Series (Halifax, Canada) where she presented six concerts, including the world premiere of a new song cycle by the brilliant young Canadian composer Emily Doolittle and Songs by Erik Satie with pianist Eve Egoyan.

In the spring of 2002, Jackson spent a month in China where she taught at the Beijing Conservatory of Music and the Hong Kong School of Performing Arts. She also gave a recital at Beijing's prestigious Forbidden City Concert Hall where she performed contemporary works by Canadian and Chinese composers.

In 2001, she went into full tango mode with her band Tango Extasis. The six member ensemble played to packed houses and rave reviews, culminating with two performances at the East Coast Music Awards with a live-to-air CBC radio broadcast.

Jackson's 2002 solo concert series, *The Canadians*, consisted of true vocal acrobatic works to pure theatre and provided her with an opportunity to premiere 2 new solo works by Canadian composers.

In 2003, Jackson mounted a successful five-concert tour of the Netherlands with her solo program *O Fortuna – the Female Myth*. The program included two world premieres by Dutch composers and 2 Dutch premieres by Canadian composers. Later that year, she was a featured guest artist at the highly regarded Scotia Festival of Music (Halifax, Canada) where she performed two chamber works by Canadian composer John Rea as well as Shostakovich's Symphony No. 14.

Jackson undertook an ambitious installation/performance project in the fall of 2003. *Angst* consisted of four works for solo voice, performed in various rooms of a private Halifax art gallery, surrounded by insect sculptures and other bizarre props. The audience moved from room to room for each piece, ending up sitting on the stairs while Jackson performed Luciano Berio's *Sequenza III* in the closet at their foot. She also performed *Angst* at the Canada dell'Arte Studio in Toronto in 2004.

Jackson released her first solo CD in 2004, accompanied by pianist Simon Docking. *City Night – Haiku for the 21st Century* features a number of especially commissioned works, including a new song cycle, the eponymous *City Night*, by Toronto composer Alice Ping Yee Ho, as well as *Eight Urban Haiku* by composers from across Canada. The experimental CBC television show *Zed* did a short documentary about Jackson titled *Shock Soprano* which aired in 2004. It featured Jackson plus Halifax double bassist Lukas Pearse and Toronto composer/violinist Rose Bolton (the InnerWorkings Trio) practicing and performing several new pieces.

In 2005, Jackson participated in the global 24 hour *Dial-A-Diva* concert which both performers and listeners could only access by telephone. That same year she premiered a new work for voice and tape, *The Handless Maiden*, by Canadian Wende Bartley at the Music Gallery in Toronto.

In September 2006 she became Artistic Director for *Vocalypse Productions*, a society whose goal is to

present quality performances of contemporary vocal music. Her successful solo project *Wolf Moon* (a Vocalypse Production) featuring 4 dramatic solos was premiered in January 2007 to sold out audiences on the stage of the Sir James Dunn Theatre in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Throughout the 2006 – 2007 season she is touring Nova Scotia with her hilarious cabaret show entitled *L'amour?*. She recently returned from a North American tour with Victoria's *Aventa Ensemble* and in September performed in Live Art Dance's production of *Ear I Am*.

This past October she returned from The Netherlands where she sang 4 world premieres in a production entitled "The Wahlwiller Passion" concerning the life of Dutch painter Ad de Haas. Jackson's latest concert *Monologue of a Lunatic* was recorded by CBC Radio 2 for the Signal.