

H. Allen Williams: Pamela, I have had the pleasure of reviewing some of your previous works, including this second outing with vocalist April Hall. What is the determining factor in deciding to record an album that features lyrics, especially when you are such a well-known composer instrumentally?

Pamela Hines: With all lyric projects it has always been a purpose of bringing more people to the music and finding a way to inspire listeners. With *Hall Sings Hines*, I attempted to use pop lyrics to cross over a younger generation to jazz. I perform “I Go For You” in clubs today and it always gets a response from younger crowds. With *New Christmas* I tried to tie in stories around the holiday season and also wrote a few lighter cuts, that I hope will become new holiday standards for today’s era. With *Lucky’s Boy* I was again trying to bring a larger, broader audience into the music. This time I used more traditional chord changes and more intricate lyrics, but the intent was the same. Bring more people into the music. It has always been about various ways to get to the improvisation and creativity. I try to create an interesting and creative vehicle for me to enjoy as a pianist, for band members to enjoy as instrumentalists and when I do write for vocalists, for it to be a way to bring people to my art through words and chord changes that represent the emotions. It has been years of focused and persevering intent, always with the goal of inspiring listeners...there are times in the music where the joy between the band and the audience is palpable and when that happens on stage I feel like I can almost touch the energy in that moment where everything comes together. But, the essence of my compositions are still the edgy instrumental pieces where there are less predictable chord changes and melodies. “Spectrum” is probably a good example of how a more ideal composition can come together with vocals.

If you look at the body of work of legendary composers you will see that they composed for all types of scenarios. We know only a handful of the songs Ellington, Mary Lou Williams and/or Oscar Peterson composed. When I write a tune, I try to make it interesting as a trio vehicle first.

H. Allen Williams: What is your compositional process, what inspires you when writing, even instrumentally?

Pamela Hines: It usually starts with a simple melody in my head or a type of tune, like a fast paced jump, etc. Then I place underneath the melody chords that are sometimes predictable, sometimes unexpected, depending on the intent. I know when I start on one, a whole bunch come out and I follow it until I’ve written enough. I also have a stack of half-finished ideas on the piano that need to be developed and completed.

H. Allen Williams: What led you to become a pianist originally?

Pamela Hines: Originally? I heard a lady play our upright in our basement when I was around 7. With jazz, my initial influences were Ella, Oscar, Evans and Garner. These days there are so many brilliant artists to name that I could not even attempt to get them all in.

H. Allen Williams: What does the word “jazz” mean to you?

Pamela Hines: The fundamentals of it..improvisation, chord structure, form, history, rhythm... creativity to its maximum that connects to the limitless divine nature in all of us.

H. Allen Williams: If you were speaking to a youthful audience, that knew nothing about jazz or your experience as an artist, what would be the most important message you would desire them to gain from your music?

Pamela Hines: Come to all new types of music with an open mind. Start simply. I feel like we actually need to “develop” our ears. That’s why vocal jazz is sometimes a good connector, because young audiences have the lyric to hold on to. Then you slip in a few unusual chords, keep it going and you’re on your way to a jazz fan.

H. Allen Williams: In your vast discography, to date what recording do you feel best represents Pamela Hines? Or is there really only one?

Pamela Hines: I think instrumentally *9-45* and *Moon Germs* are good representations. I did not feel so rushed and stressed in the recording of these and my originals are representative of my philosophy that you don’t HAVE to have any one type of chord under anything. You can. But you don’t have to. For the vocal originals side, I’m not sure.

H. Allen Williams: What singular recording in jazz has influenced you the most as a musician/composer to date?

Pamela Hines: “How Deep is the Ocean” by Bill Evans and Mark Murphy singing “September 15th” (sorry that’s two!!)

H. Allen Williams: What events or musicians are currently influencing the way you see the future of jazz?

Pamela Hines: I am noticing crowds at the jazz venues and they are enthusiastic. It is a myth that when jazz musicians play they are expressionless and only play to themselves. I experience and see jazz musicians having a ball, loving the music, loving the audience and together having those great moments when it all comes together. There are so many monstrous pianists and jazz artists out there now because of accessibility digitally. I think we need to allow new standards into our jazz books. Keep playing all the great tunes of the past 100 years but keep writing new

ones to keep the genre fresh.

H. Allen Williams: What does the immediate future hold for Pamela Hines

Pamela Hines: I have trio project with bassist Dave Clark and drummer Yoron Israel coming out in the fall, fraught with Bill Evans tunes that I hope people will enjoy.