

Whitney Ross-Barris – Bio

Long Form Bio:

Whitney Ross-Barris may be relatively new to the Toronto jazz scene, but she brings with her more than a decade of experience as a professional actor. She's performed and trained all over Canada, in the U.S. and in Europe.

As an emerging solo jazz artist, she has appeared in events as established as the TD Toronto Jazz Festival, the Art of Jazz Festival, the Toronto Beaches Blues Festival and the Uxbridge Celebration of the Arts.

Her eclectic taste in music – with influences such as Chet Baker, Tom Waits, Louis Armstrong, Anita O'Day, Mel Tormé, Marvin Gaye, Oscar Peterson – and her background in theatre performance lend themselves to a different and innovative approach to jazz standards.

"Whitney Ross-Barris sings beautiful jazz, framed by a convincing theatrical approach," says Ori Dagan of Wholenote Magazine.

"We owe a lot to the granddaddies and mammas of jazz songwriting," Whitney says. "So, I try to approach standards with respect and really learn how they're written, note for note, word for word, comma for comma. Only then do I allow myself to open them up for interpretation musically and literally. It's the same way I approach Shakespeare."

Having performed in such diverse venues as the farmyard of Millbrook's 4th Line Theatre, the bottom of the Wieliczka Salt Mine in Poland, or the Extra Space at Toronto's Tarragon Theatre, Whitney is most at home during her regular jazz-singing gigs in and around Toronto.

Whitney Ross-Barris has led an extraordinary, varied career with more than a decade on stage - performing Shakespeare in Norwegian, repeatedly rolling backwards down the stairs in the Dora-nominated production of "Gorey Story," helping to develop the world premiere of the a cappella musical "Lake Nora Arms." She has finally come home to the music that's been waiting so patiently for her.

"Stepping out as a singer and solo artist is really like coming home for me," she says. "You think you know who you are until you have a really bad day and there ain't nothin' that will heal you but a good sing."

In 2009, Whitney self-produced an EP and has been gigging regularly in and around Toronto, in Ontario, Canada ever since. Whitney has appeared and collaborated with such Toronto jazz mainstays as Norm Amadio, Bernie Senensky, Ross MacIntyre, Nathan Hiltz, Darryl Orr, Bobby Hsu, Lee Wallace, Dan Fortin, Thomas Baker, Adrean Farrugia, Mark Kieswetter and Peter Hill.

Recently, Whitney appeared in Birdland Theatre's wildly popular production of Stephen Sondheim's "Assassins" which will be remounted in Winnipeg in January 2013. In addition to her latest role as new mom, Whitney is about to release her debut jazz album "Everybody's Here" which is out December 4th, 2012.

Brief Bio:

Whitney Ross-Barris comes from more than 14 years of acting on the stage. She sings an eclectic mix of classic jazz and vintage-sounding originals with a playful and sultry edge. Her humour, confidence and ease as a performer make every jazz show a one-act play.

Extra-short blurb:

Whitney Ross-Barris whirls up an eclectic vocal jazz puree and lays it down on a bed of whimsical and theatrical pilaf.