



for: Jacqueline Amparo

BEATRICE POTTER

Adam Dobrzyński

We are learning more about this brilliant singer as her star continues to rise. She permanently lives in the United States where she pursues her musical dreams. She also became successful in Japan. The following is what she told me about herself at the beginning of a very nice and enjoyable interview:

“Why do I ‘sing’ Jazz?
Because Jazz is emotions.

Emotions are most important in our lives.
They make us and they truly lead us.
Life makes no sense without Emotions.

Without those wonderful joys and sometimes without that sadness.

Other Artists – Poets, Writers, etc. express emotions through written words.

We – I – Jazz Artists express those emotions in the tones of our instruments or – like me – with voice and composition.

It’s our language that’s clear to all around the world.

One does not need dictionaries or translators for it.

It’s something dwelling inside each of Us, and which can only be expressed with the simplest notes.

It’s Jazz.

Just as laughter does not need to be translated, neither do tears.

It’s me and my Music.

I sang thousands of concerts in many countries. I recorded hundreds of tones.

I don’t know if I have ripened yet.

I impudently think I have.

I know who I am and why I sing.

I sing my, however-called, soul.

Without needless words.”

So much for the introduction from the artist. In this interview, Beata Pater tells a story of the beginning of her artistic career, about important and difficult decisions, fascinations, beloved music, and about the newest releases.

JAZZ FORUM: When you were six, you started your musical education with playing violin.

BEATA PATER: Yes, but it was so called experimental year when six- and seven-year olds were mixed together, I received a notification to turn up for an exam – reportedly my kindergarten music teacher sent my information as a person artistically talented. (laughter) I jumped, clapped, sang, and they admitted me. The instrument was selected by the teacher’s board after examination of my hands and posture. I was not in a hurry to go school, or to practice violin, and I admit it was not love at first sight.

After time, we fell in love – the violin and I, that is “blood sweat and tears.” My teacher, I became his first student, was Mr. Ludwik Radek, the husband of Mrs. Krystyna Szostek Radek, the opera singer. Initially, I was supposed to attend a ballet school because from my earliest years I was dancing and pretending to be a ballerina. So today, I would have already been professionally retired. But, allegedly, in what I do, the real voice is gained after sixty. (laughter)

JF: How did you start singing then?

BP: Singing accompanied me always, from kindergarten, to later during solfège classes in school, in the school’s choir, and at the Władysław Skoraczewski Choir at the Grand Theater in Warsaw. I was lucky to participate in such performances as Carmen by Bizet, Boris Godunov by Mussorgsky, Tannhäuser by Wagner, or Passion by Penderecki. It was a great experience to be on the stage with big Opera stars, who emanated some kind of charm and warmth. This whole theater backstage, magazines of costumes, stage sets – there was something magical in all that, a different world, in which one wanted to be as long as possible. I recall that time as though some beautiful, fairytale dream.

JF: Donny Hathaway, Jaco Pastorius, and Miles Davis – they were your early musical references, inspirations. How did you discover them?

BP: I don’t remember exactly. My father adored Latin music, besides he had an unbelievable

sense of rhythm, beautiful voice, and adored to play maracas. At home, there was always a lot of music and hot rhythms. Dad collected old radios and gramophones. The radios were huge with such large speakers in the middle and had keys along with a divider with a green light pointer.

Listening to music later on was probably a result of older friends, who had collections of records. I remember that Witold Zielinski, who was the soundman of our band FunLight, had a large collection of records. We would sit at his bachelor pad on Mokotow until dawn and listen to everything. Tomasz “Kciuk” Jaworski with whom I established my first band, the already mentioned FunLight, listened a lot to Jaco Pastorius and Weather Report.

I decided to square up to jazz in the USA because I wanted to know what it really was. I did not feel any fear.

There were parties or ordinary “get-togethers” where one could always listen to something interesting. Sometimes, after listening to the same record several times, we would slow-play it to listen to something different, new. Back then, we would not miss any concerts at Akwarium or other clubs, as well as Jazz Jamboree every year. There was no easy access to records like today, so every chance to listen to jazz was priceless.

JF: You are like a volcano full of energy and from the earliest years. As a 14-year old, you established the mentioned FunLight, which was recording at the Polish Radio location at Mysliwiecka 3/5/7. Tell me about it.

BP: FunLight consisted of Tomasz “Kciuk” Jaworski on bass, Wojtek Lewandowski on percussion, and I as vocalist and pianist. I did not know what to do with myself during their solos on stage, so the piano was the best solution. But on that piano, I played our compositions very seriously and this is when I began singing without words.

FunLight had successes and failures, performed at Akwarium, at Stary Medyk, where for some time, it had practices and a very interesting project with Artur Turalski, for All Souls’ Day Jazz. It was a combination of an interesting scenography by Artur with dance and our improvisation. Later, we played regular concerts, we performed for All Souls’ Day Jazz at Nowy Medyk, and Hybrydy was our second home then. Daily

practices and concerts – also at Remont, but for a short time there because rock bands simply chased us away. FunLight performed at Kosz in Zamosc, at Jaszczury in Cracow, we also toured Poland a bit. All in all, quite a few musicians ran through the band back then. Robert Chojnacki on saxophone stayed for longer, Wojtek Konikiewicz on keys – a short time, Zefir on guitar – even shorter.

It was a stormy period. Colorful when it comes to personalities, and attractive against the general grayness and financial problems. Tomek boiled strings to make them sound better, and I borrowed shoes from my friend to look good on stage. Someone told me recently that the strings still get boiled. Unbelievable. From that period

and FunLight, there are the remaining records from Mysliwiecka, live recording from the club Kosz in Zamosc, one song on disc with Czesław Niemen – Little Wing, and many analog records which kick around somewhere at Witek Zielinski’s. Too bad, so little is left.

JF: Is this the time when you started collaboration with Andrzej Przybielski?

BP: Andrzej Przybielski came along a little bit later, towards the end of our band. From what I recall, it was during our All Souls’ Day concert at Nowy Medyk. He simply would come and go. We recorded at the studio on Mysliwiecka at the Polish Radio, a few nice, funk-jazz pieces, with my vocal without lyrics. Luckily, we recorded something together, as he was a beautiful, wonderful musician. And a very interesting personality. Back then, I did not know whom I was playing with, but now I think I was unbelievably lucky.

The continuation of that adventure with Andrzej Przybielski is my over ten-years long virtual studio-internet-recording acquaintance with Janusz Smyk – saxophonist and trumpeter, multi-instrumentalist, composer, and arranger – simply a superb musician who worked together with Andrzej Przybielski for many years. I hope that in the nearest future I can present something record-worthy from Smyk’s and my collaborative projects.



fol. Jacqueline Amparo

JF: And suddenly from jazz, funk, or straight out rock sounds, you fall into pure rock and punk rock. Deuter and Aya RL... hardly anybody remembers that today.

BP: Like getting into hot water? Ah, it was not like that. (laughter) Those projects were as though parallel to what FunLight did. We met Deuter Pawel "Kelner" Rozwadowski at the cubbyholes Hybrydy. FunLight performed in one, and Deuter in another. After some time, Pawel suggested that we work together. That's how the adventure with Deuter started, which resulted in the disc LP and a couple of other transgressions.

Aya RL, or rather Igor Czerniawski, "adopted" me at his 21st floor studio for three years. I don't remember exactly how we met, but someone must have brought me over there, perhaps someone from Hybrydy. We recorded a lot with Igor, it was a pursuit of sound, form, search for the truth, maybe that's why nothing concrete resulted, even though we were working every day. One can hear me here and there in the records of Aya RL – Igor Czerniawski, Santic, Giro Arana. The only solo record where I perform in the leading role is Charinko and I Tylko z Toba.

At that time, I worked a lot at the Walter Chelstowski studio recording vocals for different productions. Walter allowed me to sit at the console controls. Precisely there was probably the first serious beginning for studio work, which fruited in CBS Sony in Tokyo.

JF: I would like to capture the moment of your departure to Japan for six months. How did that come about, or actually, what determined it?

BP: As always, life and music, "Silence, nothing is happening," as Czarek Cezariusz Wlodarczyk sings in Brygada Milosci, on which I accompany him with my voice. The Cherry Blossom Land interested me, the opportunity was enticing, so I thought to myself: "Why not? Six months is not that long." I knew that such opportunity could never come along again.

Six months turned into ten very fruitful years.

A lot of things were happening: travels, lots of music, performing. More acoustic and jazzy. Then began my career with CBS Sony where I was a session vocalist (that's how I recorded, among others, the piece with Take 6). This taught me a lot, foremost a penchant for quick and error-free studio work.

In Japan, I gave concerts at Blue Note Tokyo and many other Tokyo clubs, as well as in Yokohama, Nagoya with musicians from the USA and Japan. I participated in a program for TV NHK on the history of jazz, in which I sang a few pieces live. At that time, I learned Japanese language and culture, cooking, and many other things. I even can sing

the traditional "enka" in Japanese, and not too shabby either. I can say in Japan, I feel like a fish in water, and I tour concerts there every year.

This year, I was in Japan for two weeks April/May giving concerts and promoting my acoustic album "Golden Lady." The concerts took place in Tokyo, Yokohama, Chiba, and Nagoya. I adore the Japanese audience and professionalism of the organizers.

I return to some places after years and it's incredible that same people come, who came to my concerts twenty years ago. Those are always nicest and unforgettable moments.

JF: Your work with pianist Donny Schwakendiek and bassist Bootza Necak is a very important moment for your career. Besides you worked with them for your solo recording debut.

BP: We recorded the album Session in Yokohama after a long tour across Japan. I, in the lead, Donny Schwakendiek on the piano, and Bootza

Music is a reflection We transform everything

"Buca" Necak on contrabass. It was quite an interesting experience because a part of it was recorded at the jazz club Dolphy, and another part at the recording studio YaYa. On that disc, I recorded the song Whisper Not in duo with Necak. A couple of times, we happened to play duet concerts, which I have fond memories of, I think it was an excellent experience requiring a lot of concentration and physical effort. The album Session, after it was sold out, had a second printing in the USA.

JF: Concerts, work in the studio, traveling Japan, and a new role as a lecturer at Yamaha School of Music. There is a lot to remember.

BP: There is, but it all happened quickly. I only wanted to play. When my calendar had one open window without playing, I considered the whole month squandered.

Work with children at the Yamaha School was charming, but I probably wasn't a good teacher. Besides, in school we had a special teaching program, and I, adoring the individuality, did not have the conscience to put in line the new talents. Our ways parted after the expiration of the contract, and perhaps it was for the best, as the school did not go well with my concerts and travels.

JF: Why did you eventually exchange Japan for the United States?

BP: Pure calculation, cold, mercenary. I love jazz and my singing in its form and I wanted to check what I could do at the source. Therefore, I decided to square up to jazz in the USA because I wanted to know what it really was. I did not have much to lose. I did not feel any fear, and as I already regularly played in Japan with musicians from the United States, I thought to myself that probably I would not get hurt. And that the devil is not so terrible.

The beginnings were quite ambitious because I started at Birdland in New York in the company of Walter Bishop Jr. on the piano. I remember how I was scared at the beginning, as Walter was a man in fairly ripe age. I quietly entered the room before our concert, and he was sitting at the piano playing his composition. Suddenly, he briskly turned around, like a young man, and with a smile on his face he declared: "Hi there, young talented Lady, we gonna have lots of fun tonight!". And there was "lots of fun."

Everything that surrounds us. Jazz provides the freedom of improvisation. What we feel, what we think- and every time, do it another way.

JF: Which music market is more demanding?

BP: Every market has demanding listeners, maybe music tastes are different, maybe each market is ruled by its cultural likings, and jazz has different colors in each region of the world. Music is a reflection of everything that surrounds us. Jazz provides the freedom of improvisation. We can transform everything that we feel, what we think into free forms, we can change it all every time, we can do it another way. The market obeys its own rules and perhaps it imposes a certain form, but I believe in the listener, the recipient.

JF: This year, you released a third album from your color collection. In 2006, there was Black, five years later, Blue, and in April you put in our hands Red. What sets those mentioned colors apart?

BP: Black came to life after long concerting cooperation in San Francisco with pianist Mark Little. On that disc, I sing well-known jazz pieces properly, that is with words, but already with my own arrangements. I treated quite interestingly the piece Moon River, which surprises with rhythm and tempo. On that disc, I am accompanied by the wonderful guitar player Mimi Fox, with whom I performed with often prior to recording Black.

Blue is the first one where I sing without words. That album contains mainly my own compositions, as well as those written together with Mark Little. There also are the coversos the famous Afro Blue and Blue in Green. As a tidbit I will add, there is also an inspiration of the piece by Krzysztof Komeda. Blue was quickly noticed by the critics; it received superb reviews and made it to the radio playlists of 150 stations in the States, as well as other countries. Records from those albums found a permanent place on radio playlists – which gives me an immense joy.

Red was released this year. Here, in the company of my own compositions and those in cooperation with Mark Little, I included Butterfly and Red Clay as well as one piece BachNova of the Polish vocalist, guitar player, and composer, Marek Balata. In Red, the complementary element is a violin, which I play modestly, as not to claim a title of a jazz violinist, since I am not one. Maybe someday, I will become one....This album contains a special composition dedicated to my friend Doug Edwards, jazz activists, music critic, radio

producer, who has watched over my music enterprises since the album Black. The piece is titled Sir Doug of Edwards. Unfortunately, Doug did not survive to the albums release. I was deeply affected by his departure and I still miss him very much.

JF: Will the "colorful" collection have its continuation?

BP: To stick a little longer with colors, the next album will be Green, and at the very end to close the series, I will release White. I won't give away though what I will be doing. The material for Green is already written and I hope it will be recorded in the near future. With White, I still have to wait, for now I have rough sketches.

JF: It seems that 2013 is an exceptional year for you. In Japan, you released another album, Golden Lady.

BP: Golden Lady is an acoustical project, which I recorded with pianist Aoki Hiromu and Bootza "Buca" Necak. This disc is the first position of the acoustical series, of which I already have three albums recorded, which are awaiting their releases.

The title Golden Lady belongs to Stevie Wonder

because I sing his composition with that title. And it must be a coincidence, as I would never take upon myself to perform his pieces. I sang because my friend insisted, but I had mixed feelings. This is the only composition that stands apart from the whole album, and I arranged this piece in a risky way, adding my own melodic portions. I don't know what Steve Wonder saw, but I envisioned a big Golden Buddha Lady emerging from a morning foggy mist. Maybe that's why she is so slow and melancholic.

The whole material is filled with compositions rarely performed. Golden Lady was published in the USA and in Japan and is available at the Disk Union – one of the biggest music stores in Japan.

JF: From the fascination with Sarah Vaughan and Shirley Horn to Antonio Carlos Jobim and Steve Wonder. Are there any areas, which you have not vocally touched?

BP: I don't know, maybe Charlie Parker because I've already touched Miles in Blue. There are tons of artists and their compositions I would like to take on. As if it ripens in me, I don't have a certain direction, and I follow my intuition in most cases. For me, it's very important whether something speaks up or not. There has to be a soul, same as with a violin.

JF: What one dream would you want to share with us?

BP: To be healthy as long as possible, then everything is possible.

JF: Thank you for the interview.

BP: Thank you and warm greetings to the whole family of JAZZ FORUM. Until we see and hear again. Please feel invited to visit my web site www.beatapater.com.

