

JAZZ

THREE OF A KIND

by MARC CHÉNARD

While jazz is very much a man's world, women are no longer confined to the stereotyped roles of singers or pianists. Nowadays, they play just as proficiently as their male counterparts on all instruments, from saxes to trumpets, even bass and drums. In the current crop of new talent on the Montréal scene, here are three musical personalities telling their own stories in the first person.

RACHEL THERRIEN

THE INSTRUMENT

I'm originally from the Rimouski area, but came to Montréal with my family when I was 12, after having spent three years in Québec City. After refusing to go to a school in my neighbourhood in Pointe-Claire, I was put in one in Dorval. The first class I attended happened to be music, but since I arrived there two weeks late all the instruments had



(PHOTO J.P. DUBÉ)

been assigned, except trombone and trumpet. I didn't even know what they were, so my mother had to show them to me in a dictionary. Since the trumpet had "buttons" on it, I took that one because I kind of had a better idea of how it worked.

TRAINING

Up until that time, I had had little contact with music, save for my mother who played a bit of piano. When I picked up the horn, I felt quite comfortable with it. Our music teacher, who treated us like the children he did not have, would go out and let us play arrangements of tunes by King Crimson and Jethro Tull. As I was steadily improving, I'd play with students in higher grades. From there I went to CEGEP in the popular music program but never finished the course. On a whim, I wanted an audition with Ron di Lauro at the University of Montréal, just to be evaluated, but it led me to be admitted to the school's jazz program.

INFLUENCES

I'm the kind of person who goes through phases of listening to various trumpeters, but I have no personal favourite. Sure, I checked out Freddie Hubbard, Clifford Brown, and Miles, but if I'm in need of inspiration, I tend to go back to Art Farmer, Booker Little, or Chet Baker, especially the latter because of his way of fetching you without dazzling you technically. More generally, I listen to plenty of styles, world music from Africa, Latin America, Cuba included. I was really taken by the latter when I heard Steve Coleman's *Sign of the Seal* album, so much so that I went to Cuba for a year and a half to study it first hand.

PROJECTS

Winning the competition at the Montréal Jazz Fest last summer was the first real recognition I received since starting my quintet six years ago. Right now, I'm less intent on making a third album because there is another project I'm excited about, the Gypsy Kumbia Orchestra. Last Spring I went down to Columbia with 17 musicians and a good dozen more from there joined us for a countrywide tour. A number of us then spent three days in a Bogota studio to cut an album. I hope to bring something out over the winter, maybe on my own, possibly through an American label, and have been shopping it around. This fall, I'll be spending time in New York, just to absorb as much music as possible.

- » **On the Record:** *Home Inspiration* (Self-produced)
- » **On stage:** November 28 (Resto-bar le Dièse Onze, 4115, rue Saint-Denis)
- » www.racheltherrien.com

LISANNE TREMBLAY

THE INSTRUMENT

I started on violin in grade school, which had a general music program but with a certain emphasis on stringed instruments. In CEGEP, I got interested in percussion for a while, without switching over. I basically learned music through the violin.

TRAINING

My parents were music lovers and sang in church. Like most violinists, I'm classically trained, but in CEGEP I discovered jazz, and that really turned me on to improvisation. After that I enrolled in the jazz studies program at McGill University and was its first graduate on violin. I have now been hired to teach jazz violin there.

INFLUENCES

The instrument does have a certain history in jazz, and I've checked it out to some degree, but the masters of this music have had more of an impact on me, chiefly Parker and Coltrane, and the latter's record *A Love Supreme* was a real eye opener. A guitar teacher then introduced me to the group Shakti of guitarist John McLaughlin with Shankar as violinist, and I listened to that closely, although it's outside the jazz box. There are far fewer role models in jazz for violin players, and that might seem like an advantage, but it is also a challenge because it's harder to find yourself when the field is so wide open. Also important on my own development was the discovery of Afro-Cuban music first hand. I went to Cuba in 2003 and spent a year and a half at the conservatory in Havana. What I learned most from this experience was the value of rhythm, which has since become a shaping force in my music. And, not least, I met Rafael Zaldivar, the pianist of my group who is also my life partner.



(PHOTO P. THERRIEN)

PROJECTS

I am very lucky to have released my recording debut this year on an American label, that of saxophonist Greg Osby (see below). We first met briefly at a workshop but got better acquainted when he was invited as guest on Rafael's 2012 album *Drawing* (Effendi Records). The following summer, they played again at our jazz festival, and I joined them for the second set. For now, I want to concentrate on playing the music off my album and adding new pieces to the band's repertoire. But that does not prevent me from entertaining other ideas, as sketchy as they may be, perhaps an unusual trio of sorts, with guitar and percussion, but it's all up in the air as we speak.

- » **On the Record:** *Violinization* (Inner Circle INCM042CD)
(Album review next month.)
- » **On stage:** December 12, 6 PM. (Café Résonance, 5175, avenue du Parc)
- » www.lisannetremblay.com

ANNIE DOMINIQUE

INSTRUMENTS

Early in life, I played recorder, and it almost drove my parents nuts as I was spending my time trying to lift tunes off the radio. Mind you, I had no real intention of making music my life. My high school offered arts and music classes, but since I had no talent for drawing, I decided instead to pick up the flute. The following year, I started on alto sax and in CEGEP I got a tenor sax to join the big band and knew immediately it would be my main axe. Then I got interested in Dixie music and started a group in that style, so I got a clarinet. More recently, I've added a bass clarinet, and a soprano sax, but the tenor sax is still my main instrument, the one I always take with me when, for example, I go out and jam.



(PHOTO A.-K. LAFLAMME)

TRAINING

When I entered the music program in CEGEP, I discovered my passion for big band music. I then went to McGill, where I earned my Bachelor's first then returned to do my Master's eight years later. In 2014, I completed my studies with a final concert and a recording, which I released last spring (see below). I now give private lessons at a school on the South Shore for about six months of the year, but gig year-round as a performer, with a lot of freelance jobs and subbing, like last summer with the ONJ – Montréal at its concert at the Festival de Lanaudière.

INFLUENCES

Among the classics, I have to say Coltrane and Stan Getz, the latter not as much for his bossa nova period but for his fabulous pairings thereafter with Bill Evans and Chick Corea. Among the contemporaries, I have been following Dave Binney and Donny McCaslin closely, ever since they visited our school as part of a band called Lan Xang. I heard the French pianist Baptiste Trotignon last summer, in town with tenorman Mark Turner, whom I find quite interesting. Basically, I prefer those who play with a greater sense of space than those who spin out long lines. But my interests are wide-ranging, too: I listen to other instruments, Dave Douglas I like very much, and other musical styles, both classical and popular.

PROJECTS

In recent weeks, I've played with my band three times, like last month during the Off Festival, but now I'm starting to look into the summer festival circuit. I'm the kind of person who has to set goals, which pushes me to get out there and make things happen. For example, I feel motivated to write new music for my band when I get a gig for it. I love playing, and composing too, but I find it hard to do both at the same time; it's sort of an either/or for me.

- » **On the Record:** Annie Dominique Quintet – *Tout Autour* (MCM 017 2015) (Album review next month.)
- » **On stage:** November 30 (Café Résonance, 5175, avenue du Parc)
- » www.anniedominique.com

Read a report on the Off Jazz Festival by Annie Landreville (in French) at blog.scena.org



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