

## DEBBIE PORYES BIO

Born in Santa Monica, California, Debbie found herself at the piano when she was five, practicing everything from Chopin to show tunes. Playing led to fascination with musical theory and structure, then jazz standards, composing, and improvising. Hearing Monk and Miles as a teenager, she fell in love with their music and decided to become a jazz pianist. A student on full scholarship at the University of California at Berkeley, she decided to stop going to school so that she could be a full-time professional jazz musician. At twenty, her first regular paying gig lasted a year at a Berkeley restaurant, playing five nights a week from 5 p.m. to midnight.

Debbie has always gone her own way musically, searching for music that would be a reflection of her own inner voice, even while maintaining a constant study through transcription and analysis of her favorite players and composers, such as Bill Evans, Wayne Shorter, Keith Jarrett, Horace Silver, Sonny Clark and Clare Fischer. Drawn strongly to 20th century classical music she has been influenced by many composers such as Aaron Copland and Norman Dello Joio. In her early years as a musician in Oakland, her passion led her to play frequently at jam sessions while continuing to study classical music and jazz with local players. She composed and arranged music, and produced her own concerts with her various duos, trios and quartets in addition to freelancing with various local singers and bands. She has since headlined all over the San Francisco Bay Area including Yoshi's Jazzclub, the Berkeley Jazzschool, the Healdsburg Jazz Festival, and the Piedmont Piano Company.

The 1980s saw Debbie earning a teaching credential in Jazz Studies and becoming fluent in Dutch while teaching jazz in the Netherlands as a tenured faculty member at conservatories in Hilversum and Arnhem. Her students loved her sunny California disposition, sense of humor and encouraging manner. She toured Europe as a leader of her own trios and quartets, performing at festivals and clubs in The Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany, England, and France, including The Bim House and the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, New Morning in Paris, and Quasimodo in Berlin.

While living in Europe she recorded a trio LP for Timeless Records. German and Dutch jazz reviews for that LP referred to her playing as "crystal clear, with the swinging elegance of Tommy Flanagan combined with the depth of Bill Evans." She arranged for, accompanied, and recorded with numerous singers as well as freelancing with other groups, including an eleven-piece band led by bassist John Clayton, Brazilian bands, and free improvisation groups. She composed soundtracks for a Dutch documentary film company. Then in 1990 as a well-seasoned and traveled musician, she returned to the United States to get married and raise her daughter.

An interesting aspect to Debbie's musical life has been the struggle beginning in her early twenties with tendonitis in her wrists, temporarily solved with lots of aspirin. Ten years later, intense pain forced her to stop playing for two years, during which time she explored many avenues of healing. A breakthrough came when she happened upon Dorothy Taubman's piano technique in New York City, which emphasized the natural anatomy of the fingers, hand, and arm. Absorbing this new way of thinking, Debbie continues to study it and pass it along to her grateful students. The injury turned out to be a blessing in disguise, as it led not only to Debbie's developing a beautiful sonority without harshness but also an ease and control she never had before. One has only to see Debbie play to appreciate how comfortable her hands look at the keyboard.

Since 2007 Debbie has released three CDs: *A Song in Jazz* with her trio (Jazzschool); *Catch Your Breath* with her quartet (Origin/OA2) and *Two and Fro*, duo with Bruce Williamson (Origin/OA2). All three recordings have received outstanding reviews and sold copies across the country as well as in Japan, Australia and England. *Jazz Chicago* wrote, "Poryes's playing is confident, playful, thoughtful, and full of life." *All About Jazz* exclaimed, "a knockout listening experience" and "Poryes colors outside the lines, plays to challenge and compel, but never forgets to entertain." From the renowned jazz critic Herb

Wong: “Impressive, too, is how her swinging joyousness articulates every note she plays.” *All Music Guide* calls Debbie’s playing, “infectious, dramatic, spirited and shimmering.”

Debbie felt the call to teach early in her career and continues to adore helping students understand jazz and further their own playing. A popular teacher, Debbie has internet students around the globe and a waiting list for her private practice. Her instructional videos can be seen on the web. Besides regular teaching at the Berkeley Jazzschool, she’s taught at the Stanford Summer Jazz Program and given presentations to the California Music Teachers’ Association on how to teach jazz. Currently, in addition to teaching and playing at concerts and festivals, she is happily holding forth playing solo jazz piano twice a week in a restaurant in Oakland.