

Holly Hofmann

Holly Hofmann's first memories as a musician are some of her fondest. At age 5 she would spend evenings playing a child's flutophone, accompanying her father, a jazz guitarist, on standards from the Great American Songbook.

It was an auspicious beginning for the woman who, after years of studying her instrument and performing in classical ensembles, would find equally satisfying partnerships with such renowned jazzmen as Ray Brown, Frank Wess, Cedar Walton, Kenny Barron and many of other top names in the music.

Today, Holly Hofmann has taken the flute from its middle-of-the-orchestra origins and made it a front-line instrument in jazz. She has earned the praise and respect of musicians and jazz aficionados for her bluesy, bebop-based improvisations and technical prowess on an instrument that many once regarded as definitely not a jazz horn. Hofmann has proven them wrong and critics have labeled her one of the most authoritative, swinging flutists -- male or female -- in jazz today.

Born in Cleveland, Holly's parents insisted she have a solid foundation in classical technique. After high school at the prestigious Interlochen Arts Academy in Michigan, she gained her formal education through studies with the Cleveland Orchestra's principal flutist Maurice Sharp. She then earned her B.A. in music from the Cleveland Institute of Music and her graduate degree from the University of Northern Colorado.

Following graduate studies in Colorado, Hofmann moved to San Diego, California in the late '80s and recorded her first CD *Take Note* with stalwarts Mike Wofford, Bob Magnusson and Sherman Ferguson for Capri Records. It was during her early years in San Diego that Hofmann began booking a four-night-a-week national jazz program at the Horton Grand Hotel for seven years, presenting hundreds of nationally acclaimed artists including Diana Krall, Cassandra Wilson, Tommy Flanagan, Cedar Walton and Joe Henderson.

In the mid '90s she also began performing nationally with pianist Bill Cunliffe, a partnership that led to several recordings in duo and other configurations for Cleveland-based Azica Records. They also recorded the critically acclaimed *Live at Birdland* in a quartet with bassist Ray Brown and drummer Victor Lewis.

Hofmann began working with the legendary Ray Brown at New York's Village Vanguard in the late '90s and later toured throughout the United States and Europe with Brown's trio as a guest artist. She credits Brown's support as one of the major turning points in her career and recalls that each performance with him was a learning experience.

Hofmann and the highly respected pianist/arranger Mike Wofford married in 2000 and the two toured in various quartet settings including Brown, Lewis, Peter Washington and Ben Riley. The couple also toured and recorded with Flutology, an all-star sextet featuring Wess, Ali Ryerson and Hofmann on flutes, with Wofford, Washington and Riley. Norm Weinstein of All About Jazz called Flutology's performance at the Kennedy Center, "singular and breathtaking."

For their 2013 release, *Turn Signal*, Wofford wrote brilliant arrangements for a flute and trumpet front line with Holly and trumpet legend, Terell Stafford. Jazz Inside noted, "Wofford and Hofmann lead a veteran ensemble where concept and composition are key and attention to detail and interaction are paramount." Her 2014 release on Capri Records is a one of a kind offering. *Low Life: the Alto Flute Project* features Mike Wofford, John Clayton, Jeff Hamilton and Anthony Wilson and shows Hofmann in a whole new light. George Varga, of the San Diego Union Tribune writes, "It strikes a seamless balance between note-perfect accuracy and in-the-moment fluidity."

Holly remains involved with producing jazz concerts and clinics, something she feels musicians need to be involved in, and consults on several jazz parties and festivals, including the Oregon Coast Jazz Party and various jazz series in San Diego.

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Hofmann also teaches jazz and flute and conducts master classes at schools and universities around the country. She is on the Board of Directors at Keynote Jazz Foundation which provides concerts and clinics in high schools and middle schools in the United States.

With twelve recordings as a leader in the duo or quartet setting, Holly Hofmann is earning respect for the flute as a jazz instrument. Audiences and promoters recognize her as one of the premiere jazz flutists in the world, and alto great Phil Woods, while describing her performance at the Telluride Jazz Festival, said "Along with Hubert Laws, Holly is frankly the best jazz flute player today." She has become the standard by which jazz flute is being judged.

- *T. Michael Crowell, Froggerdogger.com*