

## The Jazz Museum in Harlem

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[www.jazzmuseuminharlem.org](http://www.jazzmuseuminharlem.org)

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### ***Jazz Museum in Harlem Celebrates Women's History Month (Twice!) Flautist Bobbi Humphrey at Harlem Speaks!***

- **Bobbi Humphrey, Flautist**, March 16, 2006
- **Sarah McLawler, Organist/Vocalist**, March 30, 2006
- **Cobi Narita, Producer**, April 13, 2006
- **Delilah Jackson, Historian**, April 27, 2006

New York, NY — Dubbed “First Lady of the Flute,” Bobbi Humphrey is the special guest of the Jazz Museum in Harlem’s Harlem Speaks series on March 16, 2006.

Since the start of her professional career began in 1971, when she was the first female signed to Blue Note Records, Harlem resident Bobbi Humphrey has been playing her special brand of music to audiences around the world.

In 1973, her LP *Blues and Blues* was not only a huge commercial success, but established her as a strong crossover artist. That year she was invited to the prestigious Montreux International Music Festival in Switzerland, where noted jazz critic Leonard Feather acclaimed her “the surprise hit of the festival.” She currently remains the only successful female urban-pop flutist on the scene.

Born in Marlin, Texas and raised in Dallas, Humphrey’s training on flute began in high school and continued at Texas Southern University and Southern Methodist University, where Dizzy Gillespie spotted her when he served as a judge in a school-wide competition. With Gillespie’s encouragement she pursued a career in New York City, where on her third day she performed with Duke Ellington!

The title of one of her Epic LPs, *The Good Life*, best describes her career. Humphrey has played with notables such as Lee Morgan, Ralph McDonald, and her close friend Stevie Wonder, who featured her on the classic *Songs In The Key of Life* LP in 1977. Between 1971 and 1976, Humphrey recorded six albums for Blue Note, including the successful *Satin Doll* LP.

Humphrey has also composed and produced musical jingles for several major corporations, such as Halston and Anheuser Busch, and did solo work for *The Cosby Show*. In 1989, she produced one of her most exciting and personal LPs entitled *City Beat*, which remained on the Billboard Magazine Black Charts for sixteen weeks.

In 1990 her company, Bobbi Humphrey Music, Inc., signed a production agreement with Warner Bros. Records, in which she brought new artists to the label and produced new material. Her agreement with Warner Bros. followed her discovery of R & B vocalist Tevin Campbell, resulting in sales in excess of five million units. In 1994 Humphrey launched her label, Paradise Sounds Records, releasing *Passion Flute*, which continues to be one of her fans' all-time favorite recordings. The album showcases Bobbi Humphrey in a cool jazz setting; mostly at mid-tempo, with a surprising uptempo version of the huge hit, "Harlem River Drive."

Hammond B-3 organist Sarah McLawler is the Jazz Museum's Harlem Speaks guest on March 30, 2006.

She was raised in the church with gospel music, and studied organ at an Indiana Conservatory. Influenced heavily by the music of the big bands, McLawler used to sneak into clubs in Indianapolis to hear Lucky Millinder's big band, with whom she ended up going on the road. She later formed an all-woman band, the Syn-Co-Ettes. They spent some time as a house band at Chicago's Savoy Club.

During the 1950s, McLawler' recorded singles for the King and Brunswick labels that are now collectors' items: "I Can't Stop Loving You" "Love, Sweet Love," as well as "Red Light" "Tipping In" "Let's Get the Party Rocking" and "Blue Room." Her recordings with her husband, violinist Richard Otto (<http://www.artistdirect.com/music/artist/card/0,,889197,00.html>), include "Somehow," "Yesterday" "Body & Soul" for Brunswick, and "Babe in the Woods" "Relax, Miss Frisky" "Flamingo" "Canadian Sunset" and "At the Break of Day" for Vee-Jay.

McLawler continues to breathe life into jazz standards, performing major shows at the Newport Jazz Festivals and the Newark Jazz Festival. She's lived in Harlem for many years, and regularly performs at Chez Josephine restaurant in midtown Manhattan.

A beacon of jazz for over 40 years in New York City, Cobi Narita joins the Harlem Speaks roster on April 13, 2006. She carved a unique position for herself in the jazz world by founding a nonprofit educational group, the Universal Jazz Coalition, in the late 1970s. The group's purpose was to help musicians manage their own business affairs when they lacked managers and bookers. This led to her becoming a concert promoter and producer. Narita even hired well-known musicians to teach workshops for newcomers. Soon she noticed that women were having even more difficulty than young, struggling men in jazz, so she founded a women's jazz festival in New York to give women a chance to play in public. The festival is housed at Cobi's Place in Manhattan at 158 West 48th Street, fourth floor, between Sam Ash and Manny's.

The April 27, 2006 guest, cultural historian Delilah Jackson, has worked with Cobi Norita to co-produce numerous tap concerts and film showings at Cobi's Place. She is founder and artistic director of the Black Patti Research Foundation (named after Sissieretta Jones who organized the most prestigious group of touring black troubadours at the turn of the century), and has amassed one of the most extensive collections of African

American expressive culture anywhere—more than 1000 rare slides, photos, and vintage films documenting the performances of musicians, singers, actors and dancers of Harlem during the 1920s and 1930s.

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On the evening of February 23, 2006 Paul Robeson Jr. informed the attendees of the packed office of the Jazz Museum in Harlem about his early years growing up in England, Austria and Russia, learning Russian and German in addition to the native English of his parents, Essie (“Essie”) and Paul Robeson, Sr., the legendary performer and human rights activist.

He recounted the earliest memories of his father holding him high with a huge smile, being on a movie set with his dad at the age of seven, witnessing a deep discussion in 1938 between his father and Nehru (in which Nehru posed a hypothetical: “What would I do if I were the leader of India?”), as well as the heroic status of Robeson Sr. among miners in Wales, veterans of the Spanish Civil War, black folks, and lovers of freedom the world over.

Robeson Jr. also revealed that his mother was extraordinarily talented (chemist, cultural anthropologist) from a prominent family line who devoted herself to her larger-than-life husband. They were friends with many artists, especially jazz greats such as Thelonious Monk, with whom his father discussed music theory.

He also explained the physical and emotional basis for his father’s powerful vocal gifts, which gave Sr. the sound, control and resonance that will be remembered for centuries to come as well as the study and effort he exerted to bring authenticity to his renderings of the spirituals and folk music of a variety of cultures.

His own musical training on piano (before turning to sports as a young man), his culture shock of coming to Harlem with a British accent and knickers (“It only took two days for me to get acculturated!”), his travels to South Africa with his mother in the mid-‘30s, his memories of his dad’s special appreciation for Duke Ellington, his father taking him to jazz clubs during the bebop era, and using his booming bass voice to quiet a crowd at Café Society when Sarah Vaughn rose up from the audience to sing, were all recounted as if they had happened yesterday.

The Harlem Speaks series is produced by the Jazz Museum in Harlem's Executive Director, Loren Schoenberg, Co-Director Christian McBride, and Greg Thomas Associates. The series occurs at the offices of the Jazz Museum in Harlem, located at 104 East 126th Street, between Park and Lexington Avenues, from 6:30pm-8:00pm.

This discussion series is free to the public. To view the photo archives of Harlem Speaks go to: [http://www.jazzmuseuminharlem.org/hs\\_photos.html](http://www.jazzmuseuminharlem.org/hs_photos.html)