

# MARY LOUISE KNUTSON

jazz pianist | composer

## biography

Minneapolis-based jazz pianist and composer, Mary Louise Knutson (k'NOOT-son), has been called "one of the most exciting artists to happen to jazz piano in quite some time." Her warm, inviting tone, broad range of emotional expression, and distinctive compositions have brought her much recognition on the national music scene.

Knutson's latest trio CD, *In the Bubble*, charted in JazzWeek's Top 10 and remained in the Top 50 for 19 weeks straight. Six standards and four originals complete this accessible yet sophisticated mainstream-to-modern collection. Highlights include an Oscar Peterson Trio-style "It Could Happen to You," a McCoy-ish original "Can You Hear Me Now?," an ECM-style original "Sea of Qi," and a gospel version of "You Are My Sunshine." Knutson is backed by longtime collaborators and Twin Cities rhythm icons bassist Gordon Johnson and drummer Phil Hey, with guest appearances by drummers Greg Schutte and Craig Hara.

Knutson tours regularly with her group, the Mary Louise Knutson Trio, whose music has been described by JazzTimes as *"state-of-the-art piano trio finery,"* and by the Star Tribune (Mpls, St. Paul) as *"timeless, classic piano trio music, right up there with Bill Evans and Bill Charlap."* And from 2010-2018, Knutson toured with trumpeter Doc Severinsen, former bandleader for the Tonight Show starring Johnny Carson.

Knutson has also performed with such jazz greats as Dizzy Gillespie, Bobby McFerrin, Dianne Reeves, Kevin Mahogany, Randy Brecker, Bobby Shew, Nicholas Payton, Terell Stafford, Terence Blanchard, Richie Cole, Ernie Watts, Greg Abate, Von Freeman, Slide Hampton, Mike Stern, Peter Erskine, Billy Hart, Ed Shaughnessy, Richard Davis, and more.

As a show player, she has performed with such artists as Reba McEntire, Michael Bolton, Jordin Sparks, Trisha Yearwood, Ivan Neville, Sam Moore, Donny Osmond, Smokey Robinson, the Osmond Brothers, and comedians Phyllis Diller, Jack Carter, Rob Schneider, Kevin Nealon, Judy Tenuta, and more.

In 2006 Knutson was a Minnesota Music Awards nominee for both Jazz Artist of the Year and Pianist of the Year, and in 2005, she was a Finalist in the Kennedy Center's Mary Lou Williams "Women in Jazz" International Pianist Competition. In 2004, Knutson was the recipient of Lawrence University's distinguished Nathan M. Pusey Alumni Achievement Award for significant contributions and achievements in a career field.

And in 2001, Knutson's debut jazz trio CD, *Call Me When You Get There*, charted in JazzWeek's Top 50 for eight consecutive weeks, and earned Knutson the award for Top New Jazz Instrumentalist of the Year from KWJL Radio in California. Featured tracks include her award-winning compositions and signature arrangements of such jazz classics as "Tangerine," "Green Dolphin Street," and "Gone With the Wind," and range from the joyful lyricism of "Call Me When You Get There" to the impassioned blaze of "Meridian."

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An acclaimed composer, Knutson has won numerous awards, including two from Billboard magazine for her compositions "How Will I Know?" and "Meridian." "How Will I Know?" was also recorded by Prince's horn section, the Hornheads, for their 5 Heads Are Better Than 1 release on Bone 2 B Wild Music. The art documentary, Wellington Lee: 60 Years of Artistic Photography, underscored by Knutson's composition "Call Me When You Get There," has been shown at major art museums across the country.

Formerly an instructor in jazz piano and improvisation at Carleton College, Knutson teaches privately and conducts a variety of masterclasses, including Freedom From the Written Page: Beginning Improv for Pianists, Jazz as a 2nd Language: 7 Ways to Build Vocabulary, Jazz Piano in the Big Band: Voicings, Rhythms, and Scales, The History of Jazz Piano, The History of Jazz: A Timeline of Styles & Recordings, Intro to Composition, and The Press Kit. Her newest masterclass, Making Sense of Jazz, for non-musicians and/or budding enthusiasts, explores improvisation, typical song forms, and how jazz musicians communicate on stage.

Knutson can be heard regularly with her group, the Mary Louise Knutson Trio (or as a soloist), at clubs, festivals, concert halls, and private events; with area vocalists Connie Evingson and Patty Peterson (and formerly with the late Debbie Duncan); and with a variety of instrumental groups including the JazzMN Orchestra and the Minnesota Orchestra.