

# MYRA MELFORD



Michael Wilson

PIANIST, COMPOSER & BANDLEADER

[www.myramelford.com](http://www.myramelford.com)

# ABOUT MYRA MELFORD

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Bryan Murray

Pianist, composer and Guggenheim fellow Myra Melford has always combined the personal and the poetic. Raised in a Frank Lloyd Wright-designed house, Melford grew up literally surrounded by art, and has since crafted a singular sound world that harmonizes the intricate and the expressive, the meditative and the assertive, the cerebral and the playful. She draws inspiration from a vast spectrum of cultural and spiritual traditions and artistic disciplines, from the writings of Persian poet Rumi and the Uruguayan journalist Eduardo Galeano to the wisdom of Zen Buddhism and the Huichol Indians of Mexico, to the music of mentors like Jaki Byard, Don Pullen, and Henry Threadgill.

Language of Dreams, her most ambitious project to date, combines narration, dance, and video with music for her latest working group, Snowy Egret (trumpeter Ron Miles, guitarist Liberty Ellman, bassist Stomu Takeishi, and drummer Tyshawn Sorey.) Melford is also one-third of the collective Trio M with bassist Mark Dresser and

drummer Matt Wilson, and performs in the duo ::Dialogue:: with clarinetist Ben Goldberg. She'll release her first solo album in October 2013, a collection of work inspired by the paintings of the late visual artist Don Reich.

Melford's wide-ranging palette expands from the piano to the harmonium and electronic keyboards or to amplifying barely audible sounds in the piano's interior. Her playing can build from the blissful and lyrical to the intense and angular.

In 2013, Melford was named a Guggenheim Fellow and received both the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation's Performing Artist Award and a Doris Duke Residency to Build Demand for the Arts at San Francisco's Yerba Buena Center for the Arts. She was also the winner of the 2012 Alpert Award in the Arts for Music and has been honored numerous times in *DownBeat's* Critics Poll since 1991.

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# REVIEWS

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Long among the most engrossing of jazz pianists, Myra Melford lately seems to have entered a phase where she can do no wrong...

—Francis Davis, **2011 Rhapsody Jazz Critics' Poll**

Myra Melford is one of the most exciting musicians working in any genre, and though she's most frequently associated with the more avant-garde circles of jazz, sometimes it seems as if she's working in every genre. Drawing from influences as diverse as the blues of her native Chicago and the North Indian harmonium music she studied as a Fulbright Scholar in 2000, her music defies even the bravest attempts at categorization.

—Ehren Gresehover, **At Length**

There's always room in the precincts of improvised music for a new album by the pianist Myra Melford.

—Nate Chinen, **New York Times**

Jamais prévisible, la pianiste fait éclater toutes les frontières du jazz très écrit au free, de la musique de chambre à la musique plus contemporaine, des petits combos qui se mêlent à l'ensemble en mouvement, de la musique en constante progression aux moments où elle est en suspens, rien de prévisible chez Myra Melford.

—Jean-marc Gelin, **Les Dernières Nouvelles du Jazz**

With composure and dedication, pianist Myra Melford has steadily expanded and deepened her music since arriving on the scene in the early 1980s...the music is now and has been for quite a while entirely Melford's own, an organic substance imbued with a gentle forthrightness and lack of guile, embracing a kind of basic sonorous melodic impulse that some creative musicians avoid as a matter of course but she handles with great ease.

—John Corbett, **DownBeat**

Like her mentor, Henry Threadgill, Melford has a talent for effortlessly interweaving seemingly incongruous elements into cohesive multi-layered compositions, yielding a singular aesthetic that blurs the line between the written and improvised. As lyrical, adventurous and conceptually expansive as the work of contemporaries like Tim Berne, Dave Douglas and Marty Ehrlich, Melford's compositions are among the most compelling of her generation.

—Troy Collins, **Point of Departure**

Her projects are never less than intriguing and totally thought through...the music is compelling from start to finish.

—Jez Nelson, **BBC 3's Jazz on 3**

Myra Melford, slowly but certainly in the last five years, has staked a claim to being one of the best of a new breed. She makes jazz feel fresh again, but she never makes the listener feel cheap in the process.

—Will Layman, **PopMatters.com**

...Melford's own playing has always really tugged at my heart-strings. There's nothing saccharine or manipulative about her emotionalism, just a raw exuberance that's a delight to hear. The tunes provide maximum scope for emotion and creativity...

—Jason Bivins, **Signal To Noise**

There is an episodic but very coherent quality to the leader's compositions that makes them soar and swoop into life as a bird in flight with the measured, at times discrete use of key changes or counterpoint increasing a very rich emotional backdrop.

—Kevin Le Gendre, **BBC Music**

She draws listeners along while reaching for the highest imaginable realms.

—Howard Mandel, **Jazz Beyond Jazz**



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# ACTIVE PROJECTS

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## SOLO PIANO

Ms. Melford's solo piano concerts focus on a new book of original compositions inspired by the artwork of her friend, the late Sacramento-based artist Don Reich (1931–2010), but often include some of her other works as well as arrangements of music by Ornette Coleman and Andrew Hill.

## SNOWY EGRET

Ms. Melford's working quintet, which made its debut in 2012 with performances in New York and Los Angeles, performs original compositions written specifically for its line-up of Ron Miles (trumpet), Liberty Ellman (guitar), Stomu Takeishi (acoustic bass guitar) and Tyshawn Sorey (drums).

## LANGUAGE OF DREAMS

Inspired by Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano's *Memory of Fire Trilogy*, which explores the colonization of the Americas through the retelling of indigenous myths and accounts from the European colonizers, this interdisciplinary project features a book of original pieces that draw on a variety of

cultural and musical traditions as well as the talents of Ms. Melford's quintet Snowy Egret, a multilingual narrator, Los Angeles-based butoh dancer/choreographer Oguri and Bay Area videographer/filmmaker David Szlasa.

## TRIO M

Active since 2006, this all-star jazz collective with bassist Mark Dresser and drummer Matt Wilson has toured all around the world and recorded two critically acclaimed releases, *The Big Picture* (Cryptogramophone, 2007) and *The Guest House* (Enja/Yellowbird, 2012).

## ::DIALOGUE::

The latest incarnation of the longstanding collaboration between Ms. Melford and clarinetist Ben Goldberg, which has included co-composing multiple suites and appearing on each others' projects such as her *Be Bread* and his *Orphic Machine*, is a duo called ::Dialogue:: that plans to record and tour in 2013.

# MEDIA & CONTACT

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## MANAGER:

Amy Cervini, Orange Grove  
Artist Management  
917-971-7156  
[amy@orangegroveartists.com](mailto:amy@orangegroveartists.com)

## PUBLICIST:

Matt Merewitz  
Fully Altered Media  
347-384-2839  
[matt@fullyaltered.com](mailto:matt@fullyaltered.com)

## AGENT (EUROPE):

Karin Kreisl  
Saudades Tourneen  
+43.5244.611.51  
[karin@saudades.at](mailto:karin@saudades.at)

## PUBLISHING:

Petra Gehrman  
Metisse Music  
[petra@metisse-music.com](mailto:petra@metisse-music.com)

## ARTIST CONTACT:

[myra@myramelford.com](mailto:myra@myramelford.com)



PHOTO CREDITS: Michael Wilson (top), Bryan Murray (bottom)  
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