

Shirley Smart

Short biography

One of the UK's most versatile and creative cellists, and a rare exponent of jazz cello, Shirley draws on a unique background that incorporates classical music, jazz and world music from North Africa, Middle East, Balkans, and South America as well as original compositions, she presents a fresh, new approach to the cello.

Originally trained in classical cello under Raphael Wallfisch at the Guildhall School of Music, and Janos Starker in Paris, she subsequently moved to Jerusalem, where she remained for 10 years, studying and performing a wide variety of world music from the Mediterranean and Middle East, as well as being highly involved with the jazz and improvised music scene. Since returning to the UK, she has quickly become known as one of the most creative cellists on the music scene and has worked with many leading jazz and world music groups, including Antonio Forcione, Gilad Atzmon, Neil Cowley, Julian Ferraretto, Robert Mitchell, Kosmos Ensemble, Shekoyokh, Maciek Pysz, Maurizio Minardi, and Alice Zawadski, as well as leading her own projects.

Shirley is also an active educator. She teaches Improvisation at the Royal College of Music Junior Department, is a Visiting Lecturer at City University, and has also given workshops for Jazzlines, Birmingham, and Trinity Laban. She is also leading the London Cello Society's new Beyond Cello division from 2016. Recent performances have included the Vortex Jazz Club, Wilton's Music Hall, Brunel Museum, Green Note, Crouch End festival and Harfensommer Festival, Wurzburg in Germany. Upcoming performances include City University Music Society, and Kings Place, London as part of the Beyond Cello Festival.

Long Biography

Shirley has had an unusual and diverse career. She studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London with Raphael Wallfisch, where she performed with the London Symphony Orchestra, made a concerto debut at the Heritage Museum in St. Petersburg and gave a concert of trios with renowned cellist Yo-Yo Ma at the Barbican. After further study in Paris with Janos Starker, with Steven Isserlis and Ralph Kirshbaum at IMS Prussia Cove and at the International Menuhin Academy in Switzerland, she left the UK for Jerusalem.

Although she initially went for a year, Shirley became involved with a great many musical projects, and met many musicians and friends, so ended up staying for 10 years. She joined Moroccan jazz fusion group Sound of the Ground - the result of a chance meeting in a Jerusalem restaurant, which led to many other projects playing Arabic, Oriental and North African music with groups including Sabreen, Yasmin Levy, Tarshika Orchestra, Khaled Jubran, Radio Effendi, al-Farabi Trio, Maurice El-Mediouni, and oud players Bilal Irshed, Haytham Safia and Nizar Rohana.

She also began developing a long-held interest in jazz, taking studies in jazz improvisation on cello and piano at the Jerusalem Centre Creative for Music, run by saxophone player Arnie Lawrence. She subsequently joined both his band, and worked with many musicians on the vibrant Israeli jazz scene, including Avishai Cohen and Omer Avital.

Shirley has toured most of Europe, Russia, Jordan, Egypt and Morocco as well as all over Israel and Palestine (and occasionally getting caught in the crossfire....)

Shirley studied musicology and English Literature at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and was a tutor of Cello for several years at the Edward Said Conservatory of Music in Ramallah. She acted on several occasions as a deputy teacher of Cello at the Tel Aviv Conservatory of Music and now teaches Musicianship and Improvisation at the Royal College of Music Junior Department.

Since moving back to London in 1999, Shirley has quickly established herself of both the jazz and World Music scenes. She has performed at arts centres and festivals around the UK, and the Channel Islands, and has worked with, among others, Neil Cowley, Robert Mitchell, Gilad Atzmon, Avishai Cohen, Omer Avital, Yasmin Levy, Antonio Forcione, Attab Haddad, Julian Ferraretto, Partikel, Maciek Pysz, Maurizio Minardi, Al-Andaluz, Yazid Fentazi, Khyam Allami, Tamer Abu-Ghazaleh, Alejandro Toledo and the Magic Tombolinos, Shekoy'okh, Komsos, Sefiroth Ensemble.

She has performed at venues including the Barbican, Queen Elizabeth hall, Purcell Room, Kings Place, Ronnies Scotts, 606 jazz Club, Vortex, Brunel Museum, Forge, National Theatre, Green Note, Rich Mix and also runs a regular world music night at the Ritzy Cinema Bar in Brixton. She performs with her own projects, which include an duo recital programme drawing on her various musical influences, her jazz trio and world music band Melange.

In 2016 Shirley has been invited to lead the "Beyond Cello" program of the London Cello Society incorporating workshops in improvisation, jazz, world music and more.

Shirley speaks Hebrew and Arabic, and keeps making doomed attempts to learn French. She likes playing tennis, and has a massive soft spot for kittens..and hedgehogs.

Press

"Superb cello...Smart's playing is particularly remarkable throughout, she readily demonstrates a wide range of techniques incorporating an understanding of improvisation drawn from a jazz background and her extensive knowledge of Arabic maqam.." *Songlines Magazine*

"one of the best improvising cellists in the UK" *The Jazz Mann*

"impeccable musicianship..." *fRoots*

"A fascinating melting pot of musical influences" *World Music Central*

"Some of the most inventive use of the cello I've heard for some time." *Kind of Jazz*

Promotional Materials

Website : www.shirleymart.com

Youtube Channel : www.youtube.com/user/shirlsmart/videos

Hi-res Images





