



# Bianca Rossini

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Congratulations to my friends **Meire Fernandes** and **Nazareno Paulo** for their brilliant work of love in creating *The Los Angeles Brazilian Film Fest*, held at the the Landmark-West Los Angeles Theatre. Among its supporters is the **BrazilFoundation**, a non-profit organization that raises money in the U.S. for worthy and innovative social projects in Brazil.



Bravo to LA Opera's production of *Othello*, conducted superbly by music director **James Conlon** and staged

beautifully by director **John Cox**, with stunning production design by **Johan Engels**. This, despite the potential disaster of having to replace Chilean singer Cristina Gallardo-Domas when she became ill just prior to opening night. Tenor **Ian Storey** nonetheless brought larger-than-life intensity to the demanding title role. After the performance he told me that his personal feelings about how he had done the role were what mattered to him most. "And this one," he said, referring to *Otello*, "was a good performance." Russian soprano **Elena Evseeva**, replacing Cristina Gallardo-Dom as as Desdemona, was also impressive, her sweet demeanor adding to her light, full-of-heart performance.

I attended a party honoring the Grammy nominations of jazz pianist/composer **Herbie Hancock** and had a chance to chat with both Herbie and his close friend and musical associate, tenor saxophonist/composer, **Wayne Shorter**. A day later Herbie received the Grammys' most significant award – "Album of the Year" – for his musical tribute to Joni Mitchell, *River: The Joni Letters*.

**UCLA LIVE** at Royce Hall is having a typically busy season. Among the



highlights: Dramatic soprano **Deborah Voigt** sang a crowd-pleasing set of Broadway tunes and popular standards. **The Monterey Jazz Festival Band**, featuring **Terence Blanchard**, vocalist **Nnenna Freelon**, and pianist **Benny Green** was a feast for the ears and the heart. The 12 young Vietnamese dancers from the **Dance Company Ea Sola** gave a stark but artistic performance protesting war and violence around the globe. **The State Ballet of Georgia's** production of *Giselle* featured the very graceful **Nina Ananiashvili** and **Vasil Akhmeteli** in a performance so illuminating that it would have been impressive even without the music.



On Valentine's Day I went to hear jazz singer **Jackie Ryan** at the **The Vic** in Santa Monica's atmospheric Victorian collection building. It was a special night, not just because of Jackie's lovely, romantic versions of songs such as "My Funny Valentine," but also because she sang a song of mine. **Sergio Santos** composed the music, and I wrote the lyrics with **Don Heckman**. It's called *All the Days and Nights of My Life*, and Jackie's performance of it was magical, a thrilling experience. She's wants to sing more of my songs, in English and Portuguese, and I can hardly wait.

**At Disney Hall: George Benson's** tribute to **Nat "King" Cole** was filled with everyone's favorites. But Benson brought the house down when he let go of the orchestra and along with his



own band performed some of his own hits, including *On Broadway* and *This Masquerade*. Guest singer **Patti Austin's** divine duets with Benson made one wish for more.

**Wynton Marsalis** and the Lincoln Center Orchestra – also at Disney Hall – were flawless. Marsalis is just as a great storyteller and his stories were as appealing as his playing of "Love Songs" by Duke Ellington. At one point, he strolled around the stage, playing his trumpet, making an intimate connection with every side of the auditorium. Back stage after the program, Marsalis was just as personable – smiling engagingly as he spoke about his passion: Jazz.

The Jazz Grammy Tribute at the elegant old Millennium Biltmore in downtown LA honored a pair of jazz icons: saxophonist **Sonny Rollins** and pianist **McCoy Tyner**. Sadly, Rollins couldn't make the event, but Tyner was present, playing three utterly engaging songs. But the performance was virtually stolen by the high school kids of the **Gibson/Baldwin Grammy Jazz Ensembles**. The effervescent jazz fan, **Bill Cosby**, was in rare form telling one anecdote after another about his famous jazz friends.

She may only be 15-years old, but alto saxophonist and singer **Grace Kelly's** stellar performance at the **Jazz Bakery** was a revelation, playing with maturity, beauty and passion. Her style as a player and singer has the poignancy of a soul that feels deeply. One can only imagine what's yet to unfold.



I spent my Oscar night listening to **Pat Metheny's** latest trio at the Wiltern Theater, featured bassist **Christian**

**McBride** and drummer **Antonio Sanchez**. Although they had arrived only a couple hours before performing it was a great night of Matheny's signature blend of jazz, world, rock and pop. After the show I told him I loved his version of **Jobim's** *How Insensitive*. He replied, "That's a song a could play for the rest of my life and never get tired of it."

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\* Photos provided by the author Bianca Rossini