



ARTS

Edited by Stephen Bevis



Diminutive Parlato shows how jazz music should be sung

JAZZ

Gretchen Parlato
Beck's Music Box
Review: Ron Banks

Gretchen Parlato is what you might call the jazz singer's jazz singer. In other words, there is a purity about her style, an ease, charm, confidence and poise that make her the exemplar of how jazz music should be sung.

A slight figure on the stage, she welcomed the audience to her performance and said how pleased she was to be in Australia, which she has never visited before.

It was a no-nonsense, straight down the line approach that left plenty of room for her personality to be projected into her songs, a collection of mostly unfamiliar material in the mid-tempo, mid-register range with an increasing Latin influence as the evening progresses.

Parlato briefly introduced each number, giving us just enough information to background the song before showing us just how fine her vocalising can be.

Her backing band for the evening comprised some excellent Perth musicians — Graham Wood on piano, Sam Anning on bass, Daniel Susnjar drums and Freddie Grigson on guitar.

They provided a delicate, subtle accompaniment but Parlato gave them time out while she played in duo mode with her New York guitarist-accompanist, Mike Marino. Her dueting with Marino was reminiscent of that other American jazz combination, Tuck and Patti, who have shown how to strip songs back to voice and guitar while still keeping their beauty and rhythm.

Parlato admitted that some of her lyrics were a little on the dark side but if you "see through the songs you get to the light".

It was a poetic approach that Parlato accomplished with great delicacy and subtlety, never forcing her voice or straining for effect.

There was the occasional note squeezed out from the upper register of her supple vocal cords but mostly it was a flow of warm, perfectly pitched sounds in the middle to lower register delivered with the fine combination of precision and emotion.

Some of her songs were in Portuguese, whose lyrics Parlato explained in her introduction, which greatly helped the audience get into the mood and atmosphere of each song.

Her choice of songs ranged from the Latin and Portuguese to the latest American composers, whose work might be unfamiliar but it was certainly tuneful and tasteful.

The evening opened with the moody Bjork tune, Come to Me, which allowed Parlato to set the mood of perfectly pitched sadness with just a hint of mystery about where this musical journey would take us.

There were a few familiar tunes, too, such as Hoagy Carmichael's classic Skylark, an Antonio Carlos Jobim tune that was a companion piece to The Girl from Ipanema and Michael Jackson's I Can't Help It, written by Stevie Wonder.

The songs took us into a world of delicate rhythms, slightly sad lyrics and the kind of subtlety that only the finest of singers can achieve.

It was no wonder that her latest CD available over the counter at the Beck's Music Box. sold out at interval.



Gretchen Parlato