

JAZZ NOTES

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RIFFS

TAEKO FUKAO IN BUSHNELL PARK MONDAY



OWEN MCNALLY

One sure sign of the global appeal of the Great American Songbook is that you don't have to be an American to express the deep, universally shared feelings generated by the songbook's words and melodies.

Graced with a delicate voice ringing with shimmering timbres and an expressive range, the Japanese-born vocalist **Taeko Fukao** has, for example, been very much at home in the Big Apple winning praise for the way she's honed her jazz craft and warmly embraced American Songbook standards.

Taeko, who performs with her trio Monday at 7:30 p.m. in the free Monday Night Jazz Series in Hartford's Bushnell Park, was born and raised outside of Kyoto, where she was nurtured by traditional Japanese music.

As far back as she can remember, she has been hooked on singing, which inspired her to emigrate to New York City in 1998, motivated by dreams of a singing career.

In the Big Apple — the jazz capital of the world — she developed a strong liking for jazz and expanded her repertoire, while bringing her own fresh take and Japanese cultural heritage to bear on all she was absorbing.

Fitting comfortably into the jazz groove, she feels at ease with the daunting challenge of scatting, swinging naturally in that all-American mode perfected into an art song form by Louis Armstrong and Ella Fitzgerald.

As part of her jazz studies, she was tutored by such master jazz vocalists as Sheila Jordan, Mark Murphy and Barry Harris.

Her vocal teachers also have included Juanita Fleming and Marion Cowings. Cowings is one of the noted disciples of the great Jon Hendricks, the legendary scat master, bebop vocalist and virtuoso of vocalese, the vocal practice of setting words to celebrated jazz improvisations.

Taeko's intense studies have earned her performances in some of New York City's top jazz clubs, including Blue Note, Kitano, and Zinc Bar, plus gigs with such notables as



JAPANESE JAZZ DIVA Taeko Fukao sings at the Monday Night Jazz Series in Bushnell Park.

Harry Whitaker and Dwayne Burno. Every spring and fall, she tours Japan, and this year performs at various jazz festivals in the United States.

On early albums, such as "Stories of Life" and "Taeko," she interprets such canonical American Songbook tunes as "Body and Soul," "My One and Only Love," "Softly, As in a Morning Sunrise," "Love for Sale" and "S Wonderful."

On her most recent disc, "One Love" (Flat Nine Records), she pays homage to such revered standards as "It Could Happen to You" and "I Hear a Rhapsody," besides digging into diverse pieces by such varied composers as Bob Marley and Antonio Carlos Jobim. You can hear her sing in her native Japanese on "Hoshi-no Love Letter"; scat on Frank Loesser's "I've Never Been in Love Before," or emote on the ballad "Trav'lin' Light," first associated with Billie Holiday.

Leading their quintet, bassist **Dezron Douglas** and saxophonist **Lummie Spann**, two young, formidable Hartford-based musicians, open for the singer at 6 p.m.

In case of rain, the concerts take shelter at the jazz-friendly Asylum Hill Congregational Church, 814 Asylum Ave., Hartford.

A jam session follows each concert at Black-eyed Sally's, 350 Asylum St., Hartford, not far from the downtown park's pavilion,

the stage for all five concerts.

Live from Bushnell Park, WWUH-FM (91.3), the University of Hartford's radio station, broadcasts the first four concerts in the five-part series.

Information: www.hartfordjazzsociety.com.

riverboat ramble features vocalist **Shawnn Monteiro** and her quartet, plus **The Hart School All-Stars** from The Hartt School's Jackie McLean Institute of Jazz.

Music is continuously provided. It's piped on deck to voyagers who prefer sunshine and scenery to dancing in the popular, perpetually packed and rocking dance floor around the bandstand.

Free parking is in a parking lot adjacent to the boat dock, convenient for celebrants carrying aboard their own picnic baskets, drinks and coolers. Hamburgers and hot dogs are available on board. Ice and cold drinks are free on the lower deck.

Tickets: \$50. Available at the Hartford Jazz Society, 116 Cottage Grove Road, Bloomfield, CT, 06002. Information: www.hartfordjazzsociety.com and 860-242-6688.

Riverboat Ramble

A major seasonal event for the area jazz scene, the **Hartford Jazz Society's 48th annual jazz cruise** sets sail Sunday, Sept. 20, at 11:30 a.m. from the state pier on the Connecticut

» Send information to jazz@courant.com.