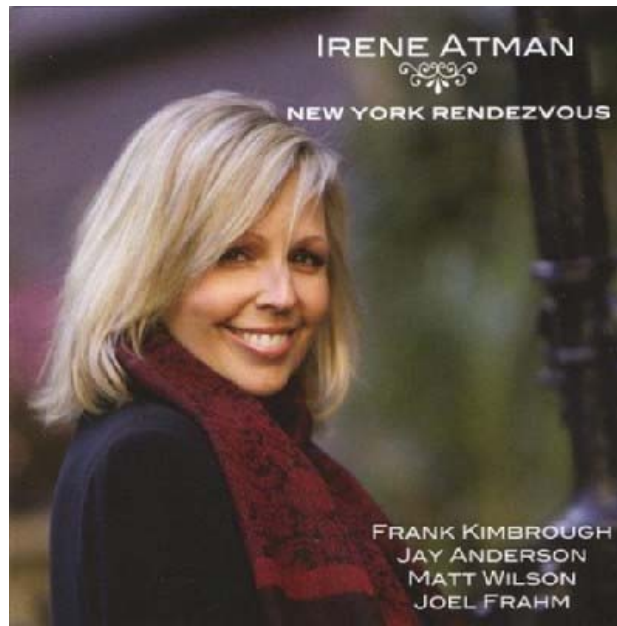




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## The Enchanting Irene Atman

Irene Atman / St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts, Jane Mallett Theatre / Toronto, Canada / April 16th, 2010



There are certain singers who come on stage and sing their songs well, even emotively, while establishing a connection with their audiences, and then there are vocalists, like jazz chanteuse Irene Atman who own the stage and who so totally embrace the moment that they sweep their audiences away to another place and another time with their music. On April 16<sup>th</sup> at the St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts in Toronto, Canada, with a beautiful smile, Irene Atman immediately conveyed to her fans that for these few moments we have to spend together, 'I want to know you, and you, and yes you, intimately, not in a sexual way, but as friends, as I share with you a magical and romantic experience.'

As the first set opened, the ensemble consisting of extraordinary upright bassist, Dave Young, splendid pianist Robi Botos, guitarist Rob Piltch and drummer Ethan Ardelli, played for a few minutes, before the blond haired Ms. Atman walked out on stage, dressed in black slacks, a black three-quarter

length jacket and black open-toe five inch heels and waved to her audience. Irene Atman's first song was extended as an invitation to her fans, as she chose Oscar Hammerstein's "Shall We Dance," which established the romantic ambience that would be a common thread throughout the evening, and was a song that she recorded on her 2007 self-titled album.

Whereas some singers feel the need to be theatrical, Ms. Atman does not have to resort to such sideshows, because the very tonality of her vocals provide the various hues for the lyrical images that she brings to life. It is therefore, not surprising that she infused the Vernon Duke / Ted Fetter and John Latouche standard "Taking a Chance on Love," with all the whimsical notions of a woman in love. In succession, there was a bass, piano and guitar solo, before Ms. Atman brought this cheery song to a conclusion. "Taking a Chance On Love," appears on her new album *New York Rendezvous*. One quality of Irene Atman's singing that is not as easily detected on her recordings, as it is in concert, relates to her powerful vocals, as she easily climbs the register and she has a big voice that fills up a room, but in a quiet sort of way, if that makes any sense.

Prior to introducing Victor Young and Ned Washington's "My Foolish Heart," a song that became a million selling hit for Billy Eckstine, Irene Atman introduced her special guest, trumpeter Gudio Basso, who walked out on stage with his flugelhorn tucked under his arm. Mr. Basso added warmth to the music, much like you experience when you draw close to a fireplace, and during his solo the notes flowed gently from his flugelhorn. Guido Basso would remain on stage for the rest of the set and he rejoined the ensemble and Ms. Atman during the second set of her concert.

The concert was turned over to the charming Mr. Basso for the fourth song, "My Romance," and Ms. Atman left the stage. One does not usually think of drummers playing elegantly, but the description befits Ethan Ardelli's playing for this tune, as he used his brushes lightly on his snare drum and cymbals, making minimal use of his toms, and guitarist Rob Piltch provided an exquisite accompaniment.

Ms. Atman's girl next door charm was evident as she cooed Hoagy Carmichael's "The Nearness of You," "When you're in my arms / And I feel you so close to me / All my wildest dreams / Come true." Irene Atman's smile melts you, her phrasing enchants you and her sophistication keeps the music from being trivialized.

Next, Irene Atman introduced another song from her *New York Rendezvous* album, “Charade,” and one notices that during the times when her band is playing and she is not singing, that Ms. Atman demonstrates an almost childlike innocence, as the stage becomes her playground and she takes obvious delight in the music.

Other highlights from the first set included Johnny Mandel’s “The Shadow of Your Smile,” also known as the “Love Theme from The Sandpiper,” with lyrics by Paul Webster and then Ms. Atman performed an elegant jazz interpretation of the Lennon / McCartney song “All My Loving.”

Ms. Atman opened her second set with the Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart standard “I Didn’t Know What Time It Was,” from the musical *Too Many Girls* (1939). Now dressed in a long, beautifully embroidered red velvet jacket, she proudly announced that she has slipped into shoes that only had a four inch heel.

As Ms. Atman comfortably segued from her remarks to the audience, into Michel Legrand’s “What Are You Doing the Rest of Your Life,” (lyrics by Alan and Marilyn Bergman), the listener gets the sense that if you have a special anniversary or you are about to pop the big question and propose, or even perhaps next year on Valentine’s Day, that attending one of Irene Atman’s concerts would provide the perfect ambience, for such an occasion.

It came as a surprise to this writer while Ms. Atman was introducing the song “The Glory of Love,” from her new album that she talked about living on a riverboat in New Orleans for two years. With a nod to the musicians of New Orleans, Irene Atman served up a soulful and bluesy rendition of the song and Guido Basso brought the house down with a spectacular, half muted trumpet solo. Pianist Robi Botos stirred up the audience with his nimble solo. “The Glory of Love,” until this point in the evening, brought the most enthusiastic and almost raucous response from Ms. Atman’s fans.

Although, Ms. Atman was strong on “Give Me the Simple Life,” and Burt Bacharach’s song “Alfie,” it was her performance, in Spanish of the bolero “Somos Novios,” (“It’s Impossible”) that marked the pinnacle of the second set. For the first one third of the song, Irene Atman’s only accompaniment was Rob Pilch on acoustic guitar and Ethan Ardelli on shakers, and then the rest of the musicians gradually joined in.

Irene Atman’s performance at the St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts in the Jane Mallett Theatre was breathtaking and it was a world class performance, in a venue whose acoustic qualities are well suited to an artist with such outstanding gifts.

April 16th, 2010

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