

Mary Records

Proudly Presents

The Mary Lou Williams Collective

GERI ALLEN BUSTER WILLIAMS
BILLY HART ANDREW CYRILLE

ZODIAC SUITE: REVISITED

"this... lovely piece of music... this beautifully coherent work... which is jazz as expansive language." —Ben Ratliff



Mary Records was formed by Mary Lou Williams, the brilliant pianist and composer, in 1964. She established the company to record herself and her own music, and issued three major projects within a ten year period. The Mary Lou Williams Foundation has revived Mary Records, 30 years later, to continue the Williams recorded legacy.

Geri Allen, brilliant pianist and composer of today, has joined forces with **Fr. Peter F. O'Brien, S.J.**, the Executive Director of The Mary Lou Williams Foundation, in forming **The Mary Lou Williams Collective**. Allen serves, and will continue to serve, as Musical Director of the Collective, with O'Brien as Producer.

The Collective will issue new recordings of the music of Mary Lou Williams. Recording Project Vol. One presents Williams's first extended composition "Zodiac Suite." Williams composed and recorded the full work in 1945. Now Allen, with her fellow musicians, revisits this suite. The composition is preserved, but these artists bring their full improvisational and performing abilities to it. The result is a living and fresh realization of a classic work from the history of jazz. Now, 60 years later, we have a second (and contemporary) incarnation of this complete extended composition.

The members of The Mary Lou Williams Collective include: Geri Allen, pianist and musical director; Buster Williams, bass; Billy Hart, drums; Andrew Cyrille, drums.

Heard also: Williams's 1973 composition "Intermission"; Herbie Nichols's "The Bebop Waltz" and Allen's tender new ballad, written in honor of Williams, "Thank You Madam."

Recording Project Volume Two has already been completed and will be issued one year from now. This will present these same four musicians plus the singers Andy Bey and Honi Gordon.

ZODIAC SUITE (Mary Lou Williams)

1. **Aries** (7:18)
2. **Taurus** (4:11)
3. **Gemini** (5:04)
4. **Cancer** (5:50)
5. **Leo** (2:51)
6. **Virgo** (3:17)
7. **Libra** (4:24)
8. **Scorpio** (6:31)
9. **Sagittarius** (3:17)
10. **Capricorn** (2:12)
11. **Aquarius** (3:13)
12. **Pisces** (3:00)
13. **The BeBop Waltz*** (Herbie Nichols) (6:11)
14. **Intermission** (M.L. Williams - M.Suggs) (8:52)
15. **Thank You Madam*** (Geri Allen) (7:40)

*Andrew Cyrille drums

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Geri Allen

GERI ALLEN stands quite simply at the center of the leading pianists of her generation.

Born in Pontiac, Michigan and raised in Detroit, she was educated at Cass Technical High School in that city, then at Howard University, and finally at The University of Pittsburgh. She is currently the Director of Jazz Ensembles for the School of Music at The University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. She is also a composer and arranger and has recorded for both Verve and Blue Note. She is now a Telarc Recording Artist and appears here courtesy of Telarc International.

George Kanzler has written that “Geri Allen is the most protean woman pianist to hit the jazz scene since Mary Lou Williams”. Laurence Donohue-Greene, reviewing *Zodiac Suite: Revisited* in *All About Jazz*—New York, continues this idea

when he writes that “Allen has carved out quite a nice present-day niche for herself as one of the best jazz musicians on the scene. I can’t imagine anyone else taking on Williams’ music for such a project as this. Allen’s forceful two-handed punch at the piano, like that of her idol, captures the incessant and inherent characteristics of Williams who was always moving and exploring in her playing and composing.”



Buster Williams

BUSTER WILLIAMS, BILLY HART, and **ANDREW CYRILLE** are of an age. On this CD they play with the full maturity of seasoned musical artists. Each of them has played with Mary Lou Williams, (Buster & Cyrille extensively). All three have also played regularly with Geri Allen.

BUSTER WILLIAMS is a master bassist with a deep and rich sound. He has a sound in his playing like no other. His approach is coherent, sure, and immediately recognizable. He has played and recorded with just about every musician in Jazz from Count Basie to Nancy Wilson, Chick Corea to Herbie Hancock, Dexter Gordon to Wayne Shorter. He was a member of Sphere which was devoted to the music of Thelonious Monk. After more than thirty years as a sidemen, Buster Williams began to steadily devote himself to composing and his own concept of a cohesive musical unit. In 1990 he formed “Something More” to that purpose and persists in this effort until today.



Billy Hart

BILLY HART is one of the most established drummers in Jazz. He has recorded more than 600 albums. He combines great power in his playing with a lyricism which makes him a master at extending the melodic line as well as providing forward propulsion for the music. He, too, has played or recorded with just about everyone in Jazz from Shirley Horn to Miles Davis, McCoy Tyner to Herbie Hancock, Jimmy Smith to Wes Montgomery, Eddie Harris to Charles Lloyd. Many other musicians have also been either profoundly, or subtly, influenced by being part of Billy Hart ensembles.



Andrew Cyrille

ANDREW CYRILLE was barely out of Juilliard, and barely out of his teens, when he played with Mary Lou Williams in the early 1960s in her trio at The Prelude in Harlem and at The Embers in mid-town New York. He has also played across a panoramic span of musicians from Nellie Lutcher to Rhasaan Roland Kirk. But it was in his starring role as the drummer in Cecil Taylor’s mid-60s trio that Cyrille’s brilliance became heard.

He remained with Taylor until 1975. For the past thirty years Andrew Cyrille has explored all manner of black music, sometimes surprisingly quiet and delicate, and often in the company of the most advanced of our musicians, driving and supporting them with his virtuosic drumming.