

Laurel Massé – biography

Very few artists can claim to have started their career in music at the top, but as a founding member of the universally-acclaimed **Manhattan Transfer**, that is exactly what *Laurel Massé* did. With her lush, expressive voice, absolute pitch, flawless diction and ready wit, the statuesque redhead left her indelible mark on the group. “I have never forgotten what I learned in my years with Manhattan Transfer,” says *Laurel*, and I will always cherish the thrill of being part of that wonderful sound.” She toured internationally with the Transfer for seven years, recording four albums (since certified gold and platinum) and the movie soundtrack of *Just a Gigolo*, which starred David Bowie, Kim Novak, and Marlene Dietrich in her final screen appearance. *Laurel* also made numerous television appearances; her favorites include Mary Tyler Moore’s 1974 television special *Mary’s Incredible Dream*, and in the *Manhattan Transfer Show* on CBS TV in 1975.

In 1978, a near-fatal automobile accident cut short her tenure with the group. When she resumed her career after nearly two years of convalescence, it was as a solo artist. Her continuing development as a jazz singer led to the recording of several successful solo albums. The first two, *Alone Together* and *Easy Living*, both made the **Billboard** Jazz charts; the third, *Again*, was a **People** magazine pick.

In 1999, wishing to explore her spiritual roots and their influence on her musical life, *Laurel* recorded *Feather and Bone*, a vocal meditation on the Divine. Says *Laurel*, “Singing and spirituality have been inextricably linked in my life. The Spirit is always present, though sometimes hidden. With this project, I hoped to reveal more of what is truly important to me.” The resulting album was described by the audiophile magazine **The Absolute Sound** as “a recording of extraordinary musical and sonic value”.

As a studio singer, *Laurel* has appeared on CDs by artists of many genres including Tony Trischka, Barry Manilow, percussionist Layne Redmond, songwriter Carol Hall and former Manhattan Transfer cohort Janis Siegel. She appears frequently on television and radio, and was

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the creator and host of *The Laurel Massé Jazz Show* which ran for two years on WAMC Northeast Public Radio.

In 1997, *Laurel* was invited to join the staff of Jay Ungar and Molly Mason's *Ashokan Fiddle and Dance Camp* as vocal coach in jazz, western, and swing styles, a position she continues to enjoy. In 2004 she also joined the faculty of *The Cabaret Conference at Yale* as a master instructor of jazz and cabaret. As part of her commitment to supporting and collaborating with other singers at all levels of experience, she teaches master classes in song interpretation and improvisation for professionals and amateurs, and comprehensive performance master classes with singer and director Wendy Lane Bailey.

In 2004 she was recognized for her contribution to music when she, along with the four current members of the Manhattan Transfer, received the prized "MAC" (Manhattan Association of Cabarets and Clubs) Lifetime Achievement Award. She has been nominated Major Jazz Artist of 2006 by that same association.