

The Magazine of the Rose Theatre Brampton

# ODEUM

December 2013



*Holiday  
Magic!*

with  
**DIANA PANTON**  
in Studio Two

*Back by Popular Demand!*

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CHRISTMAS**

+

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# DIANA PANTON

## UNDERCURRENTS

■ by Bill King

*Where did singer Diana Panton come from?* It's as if she slipped through a secret back entrance and settled in an exclusive jazz parlour for the long stay.

The musicians set up, charts neatly tailored, and then the voice begins to sing in a sentimental wisp comforting the room – familiar, yet with a new-found flair and style. Not the emotive power of Ella or the granular lived-in tone of Billie but the kindly sweetness of a new soul with something meaningful to say.

It was Jazz FM's former afternoon drive host, Larry Green, who made it his mission to introduce the young voice to southern Ontario.



Until 2002, Panton was a member of the Hamilton All Star Jazz Band. The young singer caught the attention of the dean of Canadian jazz, multi-instrumentalist Don Thompson, who invited her to attend the Banff Centre for the Arts.

Unlike many other jazz instrumentalists, Thompson has an affinity and love for the voice having worked with many of the best, including British icon Norma Winstone. This side of the Atlantic, she mirrored the late Betty Carter for innovative ways to approach a song. Thompson paired Winstone and Panton for a groundbreaking Banff workshop and time well-served with singers Sheila Jordan and Jay Clayton. This is much the same as what Thompson did for Diana Krall during her stay at Banff a good couple decades before.

Thompson imparted to Panton the close and personal journey that both he and Winstone shared as members of a mutual admiration society, culminating in the young singer's acclaimed debut, *Yesterday Perhaps*. Respected Montreal jazz critic and radio host the late Len Dobbin declared it one of the finest debut CDs he had heard in years. That statement alone landed Panton on the covers of *View* and *Now* magazines and as a Top 10 pick in *Now's* annual Top 10 discs poll.

"For this concert we will be featuring music from our release *Christmas Kiss* (2012 Juno nominee for Best Vocal Jazz Album and 2013 Hamilton Music Award winner for Best Jazz Album). The repertoire is a mixture of well-known seasonal favourites

and obscure gems," says Panton. "My trio consists of Don Thompson, Reg Schwager and myself. We have, to date, recorded six albums together, including *Christmas Kiss*. Don and Reg are two of Canada's finest musicians and it is always a pleasure to work with them."

Panton's last recording captured a Juno for Vocal Jazz Album of the Year. "Actually, *To Brazil with Love* was recorded in 2010 and released in 2011. *Christmas Kiss* was released in 2012 and we just released our sixth album, *Red*, this November," says Panton.

"All of my albums predominantly feature standards from the Great American Songbook. I have also been trying my hand at lyric writing and, thus, the past few albums have included originals. I find lyric writing very challenging. Thus far, my approach usually consists of procrastinating for a few days and then finally locking myself in a room and not coming out until I'm done."

At this stage of the game, few jazz artists have recording deals. Panton has gone much the same direction as composer/singer and independent artist Loreena McKennitt whose entrepreneurial skills have sold over 14 million recordings worldwide. Financing, packaging and marketing are all part of the ambitious Panton's day - the singer with the quiet demeanour, intuition and sharp sense of business is a force to be reckoned with. ■

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