

Anat Cohen Biography

"Anat does what all authentic musicians do: She tells stories from her own experiences that are so deeply felt that they are very likely to connect listeners to their own dreams, desires and longings."

- Nat Hentoff

Ever charismatic, prolific and inspired, Grammy-nominated clarinetist-saxophonist Anat Cohen has won hearts and minds the world over with her expressive virtuosity and delightful stage presence. The New York Times writes, "Ms. Cohen on the clarinet was a revelation. Using the clarinet's upper register, she could evoke infectious joy. In the lower register, her playing could conjure a deep, soulful melancholy. On up-tempo numbers, her improvisations weren't just bebop fast; they had a clarity and deep intelligence that is really quite rare. She made it look effortless, even as she was playing the most technically difficult of all the reed instruments... she took my breath away."

Anat has been declared Clarinetist of the Year by the Jazz Journalists Association every year since 2007 and has also been named the top clarinetist in both the readers and critics polls in DownBeat for multiple years running. That's not to mention years of being named Rising Star in the soprano and tenor saxophone categories in DownBeat, as well as Jazz Artist of the Year. In 2009, ASCAP awarded Anat a Wall of Fame prize for composition and musicianship, among other honors. As The Chicago Tribune has said about Anat, "The lyric beauty of her tone, easy fluidity of her technique and extroverted manner of her delivery make this music accessible to all."

Since 2005, Anat's series of releases via her Anzic Records label have seen the clarinetist-saxophonist range from infectious swingers to lilting balladry, from small groups to larger ensembles and back again, exploring a universe of music along the way.

One June 14, 2019 the Anat Cohen Tentet reached a new crest in its evolution with its second recording - Triple Helix. The album's centerpiece is a three-movement concerto composed for Cohen and the Tentet, by her longtime collaborator Oded Lev-Ari, the

Tentet's musical director and Cohen's producer/label partner at Anzic. Commissioned by New York's Carnegie Hall and Chicago's Symphony Center for live world premieres earlier in 2019, "Triple Helix" won raves from The Chicago Tribune as "a work of considerable expressive reach" and a "sensuous tonal palette," with Cohen "sounding like a musician transformed." Those qualities are abundantly evident in the album version, conducted by Lev-Ari as he also did onstage in New York and Chicago, highlighting Cohen at her most "fresh, sophisticated and daring" (JazzTimes). The Tentet features a vibrant mix of ace New York players – Nadje Noordhuis (Trumpet, Flugelhorn) Nick Finzer (Trombone), Owen Browder (Baritone Saxophone), Christopher Hoffman (Cello), Vitor Gonçalves (piano, accordion), Sheryl Bailey (Guitar), Tal Mashiach (Bass), James Shipp (Vibraphone, Percussion) and Anthony Pinciotti (drums).

In between large ensemble recordings, in March 2018 Anat and the acclaimed pianist Fred Hersch released their debut duo recording - Live in Healdsburg of which Nate Chinen (WBGO) proclaimed "a beautiful document of mutual exchange, rooted in melody but alert to every possibility"

In October 2017 –Happy Song – the debut release from the Tentet found her drawing on diverse musical loves, from Brazilian music to African grooves, from vintage swing to touching ballads. In many ways, Happy Song carried on from an initial highpoint of her discography, 2007's sumptuous Noir, which saw Anat weave her various horns through the all-star Anzic Orchestra, arranged and conducted by Lev-Ari. Billboard magazine marveled over the "cinematic feel" of Noir, with The Washington Post praising Lev-Ari's arrangements as "wonderfully textured and evocative." The Tentet of Happy Song boasts a different sort of richness, one that's full but also fleet and fizzing, with an open, jazzy energy. The beautiful arrangements are by both Anat and Lev-Ari, with the latter directing the band.

Earlier in her especially fertile 2017, Anat continued her love affair with Brazilian sounds by releasing two albums simultaneously via Anzic: Outra Coisa: The Music of Moacir Santos (with 7-String guitarist Marcello Gonçalves) and Rosa Dos Ventos (with Trio Brasileiro: percussionist Alexandre Lora, 7-String guitarist Douglas Lora and mandolinist

Dudu Maia). Both recordings were made in Rio de Janeiro and Brasilia and went on to receive Grammy Award nominations in Best World Music and Best Latin Jazz albums. All About Jazz praised both records at length, saying that together they made for “one brilliant bonanza of Brazilian music from one of the greatest clarinetists of our time... Cohen’s magnetism and musicality, married with the accents of Brazil and the skills of her accomplished colleagues, makes for something incredibly special on these dates. Add both of these albums to the glowing list of recordings in her discography.” The praise didn’t only come from the jazz world, with Brazilian Press saying: “Anat is an Israeli who seems like a Brazilian when she plays samba.”

Anat was born in Tel Aviv, Israel, and raised into a musical family. She attended the Tel Aviv School for the Arts, the “Thelma Yellin” High School for the Arts and the Jaffa Music Conservatory. Anat began clarinet studies at age 12 and played jazz on clarinet for the first time in the Jaffa Conservatory’s Dixieland band. At 16, she joined the school’s big band and learned to play the tenor saxophone; it was this same year that Anat entered the prestigious Thelma Yellin school, where she majored in jazz. After graduation, she discharged her mandatory Israeli military service duty from 1993-95, playing tenor saxophone in the Israeli Air Force band.

Through the World Scholarship Tour, Anat was able to attend the Berklee College of Music, where she not only honed her jazz chops but also expanded her musical horizons, developing a deep love and facility for various Latin music styles. During her Berklee years, Anat visited New York City during semester breaks, making a beeline for the West Village club Smalls to soak up a melting pot of jazz, contemporary grooves and world music in a scene that included such future collaborators as Jason Lindner, Omer Avital and Daniel Freedman. Moving to New York in 1999 after graduating from Berklee, Anat spent a decade touring with Sherrie Maricle’s all-woman big band, The Diva Jazz Orchestra; she also worked in such Brazilian groups as the Choro Ensemble and Duduka Da Fonseca’s Samba Jazz Quintet, along with performing the music of Louis Armstrong with David Ostwald’s “Gully Low Jazz Band.” Anat soon began to bend ears and turn heads; whether playing clarinet, soprano saxophone or tenor saxophone, she won over the most knowing of jazz sages: Nat Hentoff praised her “bursting sound and infectious beat,” Dan Morgenstern her

“gutsy, swinging” style, Ira Gitler her “liquid dexterity and authentic feeling,” and Gary Giddins her musicality “that bristles with invention.”

In 2009, Anat became the first Israeli to headline at the Village Vanguard, the setting for perhaps the most celebrated live recordings in jazz history; the occasion yielded the 2010 release *Clarinetwork: Live at the Village Vanguard*, which captured the leader paying tribute to Benny Goodman and leading a hard-swinging combo with all-stars Benny Green, Peter Washington and Lewis Nash. Calling Anat “one to watch,” NPR underscored the contemporary approach the group took to the Goodman book: “Cohen and company treat 1920s and ‘30s material with a relatively free hand; when they get rolling in ‘Sweet Georgia Brown,’ her rhythm section echoes the thunder of John Coltrane’s quartet.”

Anat has also recorded four acclaimed albums as part of the 3 Cohens Sextet with her brothers, saxophonist Yuval and trumpeter Avishai: 2003’s *One*, 2007’s *Braid*, 2011’s *Family* and 2013’s *Tightrope* (with the last three released by Anzic). The three siblings – with Anat the middle child to the elder Yuval and younger Avishai – graced the cover of the January 2012 issue of *DownBeat*, and among the international acclaim for the recent *Tightrope* had the *Financial Times* marveling over its “emotional sweep.” The album features the 3 Cohens improvising as an a cappella horn choir as well as teaming with such special guests as Fred Hersch and Christian McBride.

Anat has collaborated regularly with one of her heroes, Cuban-American clarinetist-saxophonist Paquito D’Rivera, who introduced her onstage at Dizzy’s Club Coca-Cola in the Jazz at Lincoln Center complex as “one of the greatest players ever of the clarinet.” Having first appeared at the Newport Jazz Festival in 2007, she had the honor of being the music director for the Newport Jazz Festival Now 60! all-star band that toured the U.S. on the occasion of the festival’s 60th anniversary in 2014. In 2017, Anat played all the major European festivals as part of the all-star, all-female band called ARTEMIS alongside the likes of Renée Rosnes and Cécile McLorin Salvant. She has also toured in a duo with acclaimed pianist Fred Hersch, as well as with iconic Cuban singer Omara Portuondo.

However easy Anat makes it seem onstage, the mastery of any great art is a long, elusive challenge, and she teaches the fine points of jazz and the music of Brazil to budding

students across North America, including recent residencies at Stanford, Oberlin, Michigan State University, University of California-San Diego, the Centrum Choro Workshop and California Brazil Camp. About her experiences onstage, in the classroom or just engaging with her listeners, Anat says: “Any day when I get to share music with people – other musicians, an audience – feels like a celebration to me.”

- Bradley Bambarger

For more information on Anat Cohen, including tour dates, music samples, photos, video and more, go to www.anatcohen.com.