



[Front Page](#)
[About Us](#)
[Memberships](#)
[Contact Us](#)
[Send News To:](#)

[Front Page 2](#)
[Jazz News](#)
[New & Noteworthy](#)
[New CD Releases](#)
[Jazz Calendar](#)
[Pacific Rim Shots](#)
[Jazz on the Media](#)
[Artist Spotlight](#)
[Views & Reviews](#)
[Guest Book](#)
[Jazz 'n Academe](#)
[Merchandise](#)
[Classified Ads](#)
[Jazz Links](#)
[Jazz Gallery](#)
[Festivals](#)

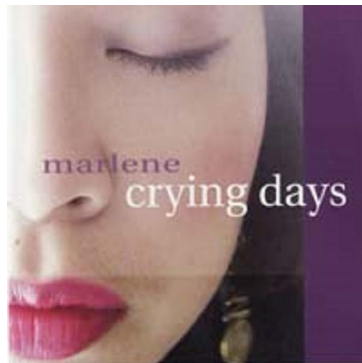
[Jazz Seminars, Feb 23rd & 24th...](#)



[MABUHAY JAZZ](#)
 by [RICHIE](#)
[QUIRINO](#)

Now available at National Bookstore & Powerbooks.

One on One with Marlene del Rosario



Marlene del Rosario has many musical tricks up her sleeve; first and foremost as a singer, then as a pianist, and then as an arranger-composer. She has been absent from the local music scene since 1999 when she left for Boston, enrolled herself for one year at the Berklee College of Music, then decided to stay on when she tied the knot. She is the daughter of pianist-inventor, Bert del Rosario, who was prominently featured in the one on one section of my first book, Pinoy Jazz Traditions.

Her maiden album released in 2003, *Crying Days*, is in the smooth jazz vein and features her silky black voice and her original works. She has just recorded a live album called, *Marlene – Live with a little help from her friends* - with esteemed trumpeter, Greg Hopkins. In March of 2008, Marlene performed spectacularly at the recently held 3rd Philippine International Jazz & Arts Festival at the Sofitel Phil. Plaza Hotel, where her ensemble opened for amazing Cuban pianist-composer, Omar Sosa and his African band.

***** [Links – www.marlenemusic.net](http://www.marlenemusic.net)

1.) Take us as far back as your grandparents, your parents, your siblings, and where and how did music come into play in the family field?

“I’m afraid I don’t have any recollection of my grandparents-- three of them died before I was born and my maternal grandma passed away when I was two. However, ever since I can remember, music was pervasive in my family. My mom was a classically-trained pianist and had a few years short of conservatory training and had perfect pitch—she sight-read very well. I have very strong memories of her playing *Claire de Lune*, *Malaguena* and *Tchaikovsky’s Piano Concerto No.1*. My dad, on the other hand, was pretty much jazz through and through, and played completely by ear. He was quite proud of the fact he couldn’t read a single note! He did an amazing jazz rendition of “*Flight of the Bumblebee*” which I always requested him to play when I was a kid.

Besides both parents being musically inclined, the family businesses were also music-oriented: piano manufacturing and sales, music schools, manufacturing sing-along systems. Dad was also a founding member of a well-known jazz band called, *The Executives Band*, and they were always rehearsing at the house.”

2.) What were your early teenage years like growing up around your father, Bert, and all the music activities that he was involved in with Trebel Music Corp?

“Because of dad’s business, we had several pianos in the house—around six or seven, which was something I was very proud of, along with an assortment of instruments which made it a favorite rehearsal space for both my dad’s band,

3.) When did you discover that you had a voice, and who were your main influences?

“In high school, I started thinking I had a good voice, but because I was really known as a pianist by friends and family, and my eldest sister was the one who was taking all the voice lessons, I played down this idea. I loved Angela Bofill at the time and really tried to copy her inflections. Seawind, Randy Crawford and Manhattan Transfer were strong influences as well. It wasn't until I decided to do a Glee Club audition in 4th year and passed with flying colors (surprising schoolmates), that I realized I could really sing. I still remember, it was Irene Cara's "Fallin" that I did for the audition.”

4.) In what capacity did you work as an officer in your father's firm, Trebel Music Corp, what was the workload like being a music factory?

“My first job in Trebel, was to run the studio which produced minus-one tapes for our sing-along machines. I got trained by an American engineer to set-up one of the first MIDI studios in the Philippines—the job was excellent training ground for me to eventually produce my own music, not to mention the practicalities of sound set-up that every musician should know. Later on I handled exports of pianos and sing-along systems.

I think we kids in the family biz, were the hardest –working lot. That's been ingrained in us. We worked 5 ½ days a week, plus there was no separation of work and rest when I lived with my dad, as he was on full work-mode all the time. That was a source of friction between us as I value my space quite highly and he couldn't understand that. That led to me moving out of the house, which was quite rare for single women to do at the time.”

5.) You garnered several awards in Manila for writing music in the pop genre. Describe the creative process you undergo when developing a new tune?

“It varies. Competitions I joined often had a theme—that simplifies things for me because it narrows down my options. My entry for The Song for Children International competition in Japan, where I was the Philippine representative, had to be written for children who would perform it. Children are the ambassadors of hope and the future, so the tune I wrote, Children of The World, spoke of world peace. This was also performed for Pope John Paul II when he visited Manila several years ago.

Then there's the outlet for heartbreak, unrequited love and all sorts of teenage angst. It just needs to pour out ---so I found that I was quite prolific during early college years...although I have to say, a lot of those lyrics are pretty sappy. Then again, some of those tunes ended up recorded by Manila's top artists.

I've also written jingles and songs for musicals—in these cases, client stipulations of style, lyrics or other considerations are the guiding factors, similar to competition guidelines.

People always ask “what do you write first, the music or the lyrics?” For me there's no set rule as I've done both. The most recent tune I've written uses lyrics I wrote six years ago. I sometimes write random lines down which I don't throw away, and revisit them later on. There is one song I wrote in five minutes (music and lyrics), another one where I woke up with the theme line, and a few which were my instrumental projects at Berklee which I decided to put lyrics to. I have a rougher time with lyrics though as my internal critic (which I try to suppress) seems quite active in lyric-writing (too sappy, too trite, too cliché, etc., etc.)”

6.) From pop to jazz, how did this all fit in and where did your jazz influences come from on the piano, the voice, and the creative aspects of music?

“I grew up surrounded by jazz because of my dad—but frankly I wasn’t into Dixieland jazz as a kid, which was what his band played. I liked Joe Sample, Dave Grusin and Dave Benoit, but then I discovered Chick Corea and Return to Forever, and that changed everything, as I really loved that sound. It had a darkness and strangeness to it which I thought was really cool. I played a lot of his tunes by ear, and dad didn’t understand this kind of music and would always ask me to play “normal” or “standard” music (which people could understand), and I resented it at the time. It’s funny, because as a professional musician now, a lot of these “standards” are in my repertoire!

Towards the end of college, Sting’s music became a great influence in my song writing and arrangements. I also loved Joni Mitchell and Steely Dan. And on the jazz side, I listened to Herbie Hancock, Keith Jarrett, and my favorite, Bill Evans.”

7.) Every musician has a funny story to tell. What’s yours when it comes to music?

“I’m not sure it’s the funniest, but it’s definitely the most recent. A few days ago, I had a gig for a corporate function with my quartet, and Greg Hopkins, probably Boston’s best trumpet player, who’s played with Ella Fitzgerald, Dizzie Gillespie, Frank Sinatra, Stevie Wonder and so many other legends, was in my band. One of the guests came over to compliment us and request Coltrane tunes. Then he asked us what our day jobs were.”

8.) In 1999 you decided to take the plunge and go to Berklee College of Music in Boston. What were the first years like in terms of your growth as an artist?

“The first week was a reality check. Prior to Boston, I was practicing 1 hour a week and then I met my first friends in Berklee, a German and Korean, who practiced three and five hours a day. And when I saw Berklee’s practice buildings with their waiting lists, the gravity of the situation dawned on me-- I seriously lagged behind. Also, I always believed I had “great rhythm” because my dad said so. Well, I soon found out that that was actually something I seriously had to work on.

Berklee had an amazingly vibrant atmosphere—it was and is a melting pot of global talent, some students were already quite famous in their own countries. And of course, the faculty was a veritable who’s who. I had the great fortune of studying under Manhattan Transfer’s Cheryl Bentyn and also with Livingston Taylor (James Taylor’s brother) who are amazing teachers. I think it was inevitable being surrounded by so much talent and the expanded sense of possibilities, that my own standards for myself would change and push me to develop much faster than if I were left on my own.”

9.) What was supposed to be a year’s stay is turning out to be a lifetime decision. What’s the whole truth in your staying much longer as planned?

“I LOVED Berklee and Boston. I originally planned to study for just a semester, but because I really loved being in Berklee and Boston, I decided to complete the year. I took out a loan as I only had enough funds for one semester. When the year ended, I decided I wanted to be a professional jazz musician, and thought I had a better chance of making a career of it here than in the Philippines, because at the time it (RP) had such a small jazz market. I also made a lot of good friends over here and the lifestyle suited me very well.”

10.) You tied the knot with another artist such as yourself. How do you balance things out, do you compliment each others art form, or do normal differences of opinion come into play and how do you deal with it if at all?

“My husband, Jeff, is in a totally different genre. He’s a visual artist: a painter

and graphics designer. But in addition, he's also a wine connoisseur, antiques collector, and chef. I think it's great that we both have artistic sensibilities yet express it in different forms, otherwise, our egos (which artists tend to have in large quantities) might clash. We both love to cook and whilst we generally pair well in the kitchen, there have been competitive moments.

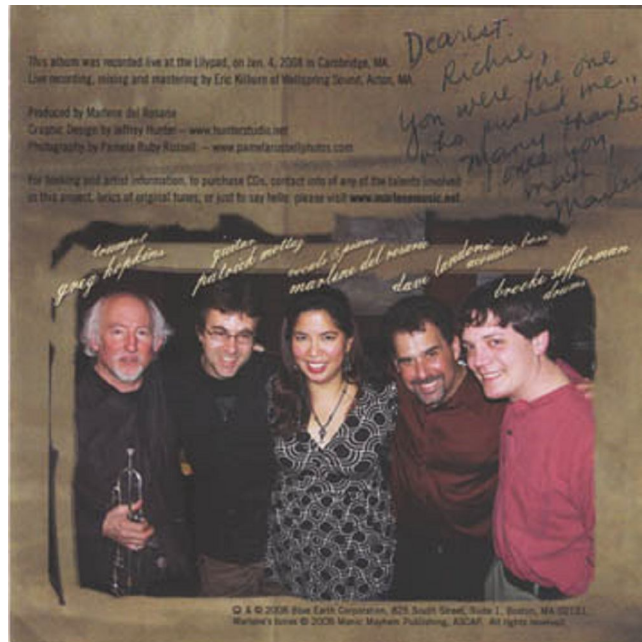
Like all couples, difference of opinions will always come to play. The challenge is in being comfortable with the difference. I think if everyone could come to this conclusion, we wouldn't have war in the first place."

11.) You're known to be one who doesn't sleep on the wheel. Where are you driving yourself down the long and winding road?

"Funny you should say that. I literally was known for "sleeping on the wheel", at least when I was in Manila. The traffic was so awful I'd fall asleep during the stops and would wake up to cars honking at me (I had my handbrakes on, of course). That aside, I see myself doing more of what I'm doing today. One is music. Thankfully jazz is one of those few fields where growing old is ok, and could even be an asset—that's important to me because I started fairly late professionally and there's so much that I want to develop in my music. I love performing and would love to keep doing concerts. However, my other passions lie in food and travel—I love gourmet cooking (and eating) and want to hone my skills further. Traveling is essential as well, and if I could combine them, such as performing abroad, and tasting exotic cuisine while I'm at it, together with my best travel buddy, Jeff, then that's heaven!"

12.) Your words of wisdom to all the wide-eyed teenagers who are engulfed in a music filled world?

"Do what you love. If you are considering music as a career, forget American Idol. It takes discipline and work to do something well. Doing something you love is a reward in itself --when you're happy, you attract all sorts of positive things in your life. If you do things because of an external reward such as fame or fortune, you'll start to pander to it and do things you might not necessarily like and in the end, you may get the fame and fortune, but not the happiness."



• OUR SPONSOR

Jazzphil is proud to announce that [Vibal Publishing](#) through its pet project, [Filipiniana.net](#) is now sponsoring our website through the kindness of Gaspar Vibal, himself a jazz lover and New Yorker. Gus sponsored the Berlin based trio that graced our international jazz fest held last February.

© 2003-2006 Jazz Society of the Philippines, Inc.
All rights reserved unless specified otherwise within this web site.