

# ELIZABETH TOMBOULIAN BIO



Elizabeth Tomboulian, also known as Betty, has been singing professionally since 1971. A native Arkansan, she studied voice and piano at the University of Arkansas. She developed her art as a singer/songwriter in Arkansas and south Texas, singing songs by such popular music favorites as: Joni Mitchell, Phoebe Snow, Linda Ronstadt, and Carole King, and touching on the song stylings of Billie Holiday. She accompanied herself primarily on guitar at that time.

Her repertoire took a turn toward jazz in Houston in 1977, where she studied vocal jazz with Ray Sullenger, jazz piano with Kip Galbraith and jazz improv with Tony Campisi at the University of Houston. She sang for a couple of years atop the Shell building in the Plaza Club with Kip, who called her "Betty Bop," a name she used professionally for a number of years. Some of her vocal heroes discovered at that time are: Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughn, Mel Torme, Tony Bennett, and the group Lambert, Hendricks and Ross.

In 1979, she moved to New Orleans, where she was featured at Lucky Pierre's (piano bar) on Bourbon Street. There she met Charles Neville, and played piano with "The Charles Neville House Band" and sang with "New Orleans Ladies" at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival in 1980. On a lark, she moved to Boulder, Colorado in August that year where she was a local opener at *The Blue Note*, sharing the stage with Tom Scott and the LA Express, Charlie Musselwhite, and Richie Cole. Richie was so impressed by her vocal scat that for his encore, he sent the band offstage and finished the night with a duet with Betty.

In 1980 she moved to Nashville. She spent seven years doing studio work and trying to get a record deal for her groups, *The Lost Renés* and *Whatever It Takes*. After burning out from the occupational hazards of the music biz in the 1980s, she moved back to Arkansas in 1987, where she met her husband, Lee, in 1988.

Lee introduced her to the music of Eddie Harris, and the soloists of the cool jazz era as well as the music of South America (Brazil and Uruguay). This piqued her interest in studying the music of Milton Nascimento, Antonio Carlos Jobim, Hugo Fattoruso and Toninho Horta. She is featured on the release of *Circo - North/South Convergence*, a collaboration with her husband and a six-piece group, produced by Hugo Fattoruso. See [www.circomusic.com](http://www.circomusic.com) to hear songs from *North/South Convergence*.

While in Arkansas, she played piano professionally and studied piano with Tom Cox while in the ensemble "Salsa Picante" at UALR. She also met and sang with Sheila Jordan at a concert in Fayetteville in 1992.

The Tomboulians moved to Denton, Texas, in 1993, where Betty was in the University of North Texas Jazz Singers in '94. She joined the Denton Bach Choir in '95, and studied classical voice for the first time since her teens. She recorded *Elijah* by Felix Mendelssohn, *Mass in B Minor* by J.S. Bach with the Denton Bach Choir. She was a soloist on the 1999 Denton Bach Choir production of "Messiah" by George F. Handel.

In 1998, she began as song leader for a contemporary Christian service at Trinity United Methodist Church. She joined the choir at St. Andrew Church of God in Christ in 2000, and in September 2001, she became the musician and choir director at St. James AME in Denton. She then served for 2 years at Community Presbyterian Church, a new church development in Corinth, Texas, as pianist, soloist and song leader.

She was featured on the Sammons Center for the Arts Jazz Series in 2005. Betty is a lover and a fan of many styles of music, and has an extensive repertoire of pop, jazz and standards from the United States and Musica de Popular Brasileira.

In 2005, she studied with Bobby McFerrin and Voicestra at the Omega Institute in Rhinebeck, New York, where she first studies with Rhiannon, sparking her interest in sound healing. Subsequently, she has studied with Rhiannon in Madison in 2005 and will again on the Big Island of Hawaii in 2006.

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