

PRIDE ENTERTAINMENT FEATURES
 "Your Connection to Entertaining Long Island's GLBT Community"

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Twenty Questions With...

Manhattan Transfer's **Cheryl Bentley**

I am very excited to have recently interviewed Cheryl Bentley for this, the premiere edition of "20 Questions With ...". For those who do not know her name, this very gifted jazz vocalist is best known as one-fourth of the musical group Manhattan Transfer.

Aside from her notable work with Manhattan Transfer, Bentley has also released several solo projects. Her third solo album on the Telarc label was recently released. "The Book of Love" contains an even dozen tracks all about the phases of love. (See review on lower left)

"The Book of Love" is an album whose theme is wholly appropriate for the woman who seems to be a romantic at heart; who proclaims "Doctor Zhivago" to be her favorite film; and who relishes her "dates" with her husband. A romantic evening to her, she states includes "Listening to Shirley Horn's "Here's To Life," a warm breeze, a bubble bath, my husband in a white shirt and Khaki's smelling of Chanel's "Anteus" and me in black lace. OohLa! La!"

During this holiday season, like most people, she views her husband and daughter to be her greatest gifts. Happily, she states how grateful she is to have them in her life "I never imagined in my wildest dreams I would have such a life with a real family. Traveling all my life (!) lived hard and fast way back when ... Corey was the right one, the only one. He convinced me I would be a great mother too..."

After a busy day, relaxation and fun are important. Although sometimes she admits to zoning out by watching her two favorite channels Comedy Central or HGTV "Playing pool with my husband and going out on our weekly date." she states are actually her favorite ways to relax and have fun,

Although she will be performing in Omaha, Nebraska on New Year's Eve, away from her family, she looks forward to the simple joys and traditions the holidays bring. Proud of her collection of Santas, she loves to display them at home for her family and friends. Another one of her traditions include viewing two of her favorite holiday movies, "Meet Me in St. Louis" with Judy Garland and the original "Miracle on 34th Street."

To celebrate the release of her new CD, Ms Bentley sat down to answer the following 20 questions ... and more. In this interview we gave her a chance to reflect on her new album, her past triumphs, touch on future plans, and explore her musical influences and relationships. In addition to talking about her newest release, we found ourselves chatting a bit about our GLBT community, her politics, and the AIDS crisis. (The answers that follow are her words except for those in { }. Those have been added for clarification purposes and to improve conversation flow, as has punctuation)

What have been the greatest challenges in your life or career? *Having both a personal life and a career! Going on the road and still being a hands-on mother and wife ... Very difficult (to do) over the phone (or) Email lines.*

Who were your major career influences? *My Father. He was a band leader and great musician. My mother, she pushed me. Judy Garland, Barbra Streisand, (and) the Ed Sullivan Show!!*

Describe your most satisfying career experience(s)? *Meeting and singing with my musical heroes from Ella (Fitzgerald) to Tony Bennett, to Willie Nelson, Etc. It hasn't ended yet so I hope to keep experiencing the thrill of it all!*

How does the experience of working as a solo artist differ from your experiences working in Manhattan Transfer? *As a soloist I get to pick my songs, sing in my lower range. Very satisfying ... and I only worry about my performance. With the group it's an ensemble experience all the way! If one of us goes off key etc we all have to stop and start over again. We rise and fall together. (It's) a great learning experience for me to work with others. The group dynamic is very rewarding and very frustrating at the same time.*

Which is more important to you; the lyrics or the music? *Lyrics first. But music comes in a very close second. They must complement each other. If not, I move onto another song*

There is a saying that "music speaks louder than words" In what ways does music speak to you? *It can conjure up senses memory smell sound taste a moment in the past. I don't know of any other art form that can do this. It's an extraordinary, magical art!*

What brought you to Telarc? *They liked my CD (that) I released in Japan "TALK OF THE TOWN" and wanted to release it here in the U.S. and the rest of the world. So I said "Let's go!" They bought the distribution rights and we have lived HAPPILY EVER AFTER (since). They are so great and are absolutely the number one record company for Jazz Vocals.*

What can you tell us about your new album? How did it come about? *I love thematic albums. They make it so easy for a listener to experience the music with you. I had already chosen "Be My Love" as the centerpiece song. I worked around that one and with Corey's help we chose songs that filled the bill as far as (to the) beginning of love till the end. I wanted to give people something they could be familiar with so I chose a few well-known songs and a few not so well known.*

When I first received my review copy of "Book of Love" I loved how the songs chosen covered many decades of music and many phases of love. As a concept, the idea of dividing it up into many chapters and exploring each as a theme was



As you know, many lives have been lost to the AIDS crisis. How has the AIDS crisis affected or changed you? *I know a very gifted musician who has outlived (what doctors thought was) his life expectancy by 10 or so years and (he) is still going strong. I am so moved by his generosity to the music world as he is so incredibly prolific in every project he does. Wish I had this much spirit and will.*

What do you think we as people, or as a government, can do about the epidemic that we are not doing? *Vote Democratic.*

How do you feel the entertainment industry has changed regarding its involvement in fundraising for AIDS causes and other causes? *I almost feel the music industry has done so much for so many causes, beyond giving music to the world. So much more than the present administration. It's sickening! Thank God for the music.*

How can the entertainment industry do more? *Just keep on doing what they are doing. I love musicians.*

In this last part of the interview we are going to touch on your hopes and dreams for the future.

What would be your idea of a 'Dream Project'? *Perhaps "art" pieces of Bernstein or Sondheim or both, sung with Peter Gabriel. How's that for a wish list?*

How do you see your life with-in the next 10 years? *Get the Democrats back in office so we don't go completely down the toilet as a country. Move to a beautiful ranch and get my daughter 2 horses. And maybe I will even try to ride! And just live!*

Is there anything that we haven't discussed that you'd like to add? Any thoughts you might want to leave us with? *Be thankful at every given moment you think of it. Kiss your loved ones as much as possible and tell them you love them always.*

Review: **"The Book Of Love"**

quite interesting, and worked out quite well.

How did the concept of dividing it into "chapters" come about? I just thought of it and it "read" well as did writing out the lyrics in paragraph form. They read as prose very beautifully, I think.

What was the hardest aspect about the whole process? NOT being able to sing with the trio during the session. I had laryngitis and couldn't even get a peep of a sound out. So, that was frustrating as I have never NOT sung live with the band in the studio.

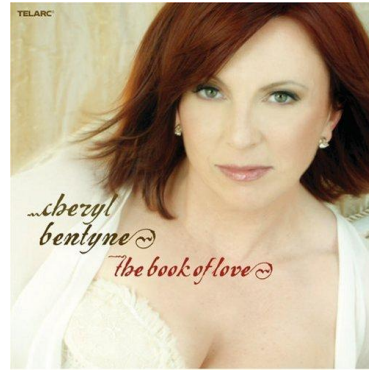
How did you choose the personnel who were to be involved in this recording? Corey has his guys, now (they're) my guys too! They are the very best there are. We added violin, trumpet and cello along with the strings from Prague. The songs themselves dictated what Corey had in mind for the particular arrangements. I am very happy with all the "ear candy" on the CD.

In this next section we will explore your fan-base. Like many jazz vocalists you have a pretty vast fan-base, which includes many of us within the gay community.

How has our community shown you support? I am blessed to have a very strong following in the Gay Community I think. My favorite fan base as far as letting me be me and encouraging my rather flamboyant stage persona out of its little cage!! Hahahaha!

Several entertainers (no names will be mentioned) have built their careers on a heavy Gay & lesbian fan-base and then dis-associate themselves from those fans. How have you managed to keep your gay and lesbian following? By not thinking of them as anything but great fans! And respecting them all, and being there if needed.

When you first heard about AIDS, What thought and fears went through your mind? Terror! I saw it in every one of my gay friends' eyes. And (the) encouragement to practice safe sex.



Cheryl Bentley: "The Book Of Love" [Telarc] (Nov. 21): The book of love has many chapters. From "Longing" to "Loss", love is an all-encompassing journey... As is this collection of love tracks from Cheryl Bentley, one-fourth of the jazz quartet, the Manhattan Transfer.

On her third solo project for Telarc Records, Bentley is accompanied by the City of Prague Symphony Orchestra Strings under the direction of Corey Allen, and is joined on vocals by John Pizzarelli, Zoe Allen, and Take 6 vocalists Mark Kibble & Alvin Chea. Guitarists Grant Geisman & Wayne Johnson round out the guest artists on this emotion-laden trek through love.

We begin love's journey with Chapter One: "Longing" which is epitomized by the songs, "You Dont Know Me" and "Be My Love" before we move into the next chapter "Flirtation", represented by "Blue Moon" (sung as a duet with Pizzarelli) and the Cole Porter classic "Let's Do It." Next we have the next three chapters, "Lust," "Love," and "Joy" of which "Dont Say A Word", the title track (where she is joined by those fellows from Take 6), "You Taught My Heart To Sing" & "You Go To My Head" are part. Finally comes the hardest of the aspects of love, "Disillusion" & "Loss" which are here portrayed by "Cry Me A River," "I'm A Fool To Want You" and "Goodbye". Finally the book closes with the Epilogue in the form of a reprise of the title track, again with Take 6. When you are serenaded with the smooth vocals of Bentley and the lushness of Allen & company's musical arrangements, you know that you can survive all the joys & heartaches that love brings. (Available at Amazon.com or your local record store).

