

Summary

Kristin Center (born August 8, Cambridge, MA) is an American concert pianist, contemporary art-song composer and singer-songwriter known for her unusual writing style that combines latin funk and impressionist classical styles with a fierce lyrical message of *open your mind*.

Studying solo classical piano since age 5, she made her first public performance at age 6 in Seattle, Washington and since then has pursued a rigorous academic, creative, and performance-based lifestyle... the lifestyle that formed a straight-shot singer-songwriter career in the summer of 2010 revolving around rapidly increased YouTube subscribers, the release of her self-produced 2011 EP, *Consider The World*, a New York tour in 2011, and final move to Los Angeles, California in January of 2012.

In a modern sense, Kristin's contemporaries are Norah Jones, Fiona Apple, Sara Bareilles, Alicia Keys, Lily Allen, Nellie McKay, Regina Spektor and Ingrid Michaelson, while her compositional roots are traced to Rachmaninoff, Ravel and J.S. Bach.

Early Life and Family

Kristin is of Native American, French and German ancestry. However, much of her cultural upbringing is derived from Spanish, Italian and South American traditions. In 1997, Kristin's family moved off the beaten path of Fall City, WA up into the mountains and established a small farm. Her early childhood was spent mostly alone, without any TV reception, thus causing her early artistic inspiration to spawn mainly from her natural surroundings. Her father also pushed a heavy athletic lifestyle that included rock climbing, skiing and hiking; all of which stimulated and formed Kristin's creative life.

With an unorthodox exposure to various genres of music, Kristin's ear was trained early to be very open minded. When her mother was pregnant, fetus-Kristin was introduced to live J.S. Bach performances and Mozart operas. Early adolescent years were spent checking out traditional African and Caribbean collections at the public library. As early as age 5, Kristin began composing melodies with her mother at their upright piano and also enjoyed drawing at the drafting table. As the time passed, Kristin's mother became an active Flamenco dancer and having previously spent much time in South America, the family's listening collection consisted of much "world music", brazilian and latin beats, jazz and, of course, classical.

At age 9, Kristin became an active musician in musical opportunities in the valley including various wind ensembles, orchestras, and big bands. However, the genres that she enjoyed and pursued the most were her solo classical piano and jazz alto saxophone. Upon becoming a young teenager in America, it was quite impossible to refuse influence from various current popular artists such as John Mayer, Christina Aguilera, Stevie Wonder, Norah Jones, James Brown, and Bob Marley. Because of these early-

adolescent influences, her compositions were harmonically founded on classical and jazz chords, her voice sounded of pop and blues origin, and the undertone driving it all was a Brazilian and reggae mixed meter. Kristin's experience with different instruments also broadened her outlook on musical sounds. She played trumpet and horn for 2 years, djembe for 3, and dabbled in the harmonium and clarinet for 6 months.

Career and Study

At age 18, Kristin won the Gershefski Competition Scholarship and at age 19 she became alternate finalist for the Seattle International Piano Competition. Later that same year she was the pro-Mozart Society Scholarship winner in Atlanta, a position that would fly her all expenses paid for the first time overseas to study and perform. The following year she became the GMEA first prize winner holding a recital debut in Savannah, GA. She has performed nationally in Seattle, Atlanta, Los Angeles, Boston and New York and internationally in Austria and France. Kristin held a full scholarship to Southern Methodist University where she studied with Alfred Mouledous (a student of both Walter Gieseking and Alfred Cortot) and Alessio Bax (winner of the 2009 Avery Fisher Career Grant). Her previous predominant piano teachers were African Diaspora specialist, William Chapman Nyaho and Martha Thomas, the chair of the piano department at UGA where Kristin was the first performance student to complete a four-year Bachelors Music degree in three years. Kristin has recently developed her classical music technique working with artists such as Murray Perahia, Menahem Pressler, Orli Shaham, Jean Paul Sevilla, Robert Levin and Andrzej Jasiński in festivals including the International Keyboard Institute held in New York City and the Mozarteum Summer Institute in Salzburg, Austria where she also held full scholarships. While studying in France, Kristin worked with retired theory department heads of the Paris Conservatoire.

Upon returning to the United States after her France studies, Kristin began performing more and more of her own compositions that were widely received by a local fan base in Dallas. Within a short time she was performing at notable venues in Texas, such as the Kessler Theater, opening for Texas' superstar and state musician, Sara Hickman. Soon thereafter she performed at the Bitter End in New York City (a popular performing venue for Tori Amos, Billy Joel, Miles Davis, Stan Getz, Stevie Wonder, Lady Gaga and many more), New York's National Underground, Kenny's Castaways, Sycamore in Brooklyn and LA's famous Roxy Theater. At jazz dive, Lucid, Kristin opened for "The Teaching" in Seattle.

In the Winter of 2009 Kristin co-founded with Michael Jackson an innovative program intended to bring classical music to a wider audience. This program is called Classical Open Mic (COM) and initially transpired at a local coffee house in downtown Dallas where diverse ethnic groups collected. Kristin and Michael drew talented students from SMU and other local colleges to perform for these audiences and

begun a wave of new-found respect for classical music in the local hangout. The musicians also benefited tremendously from the program with the added practice performing and time connecting to the audience about their piece(s).

Kristin's biggest passion involves exposing the truth and generating activism, as heard in her lyrics and witnessed in her actions by those closest to her. This shines especially bright when it comes to protecting the organisms that have trouble speaking for themselves. Her love of wild cats early on determined one of the outlets for this passion and Kristin has focused much of her musical assets on helping make a difference in the lives of great animals whose habitats, like many others, are constantly being taken from them.

Other Accomplishments

Kristin is also a published writer and has given multiple presentations and lectures on African American studies in relation to music. One paper particularly involved the in depth study of William Grant Still and his art songs in comparison to George Gershwin.