

ELAINE DELMAR - singer

Interviewed April 29, 2024

**Early years:**

Born in Hertfordshire in 1939. Father was in a military band. Returned to the UK ten years later when father was asked by friends to join a band. House was always full of music and musicians: Brian Dee (lodged in her father's house), Bob Cornford (jazz pianist), Bobby Worth (pianist and songwriter). Father died in a car accident when Elaine was 18 years old. Father survived the Café de Paris bombing (8 March 1941 which killed 34 people including Ken "Snakehips" Johnson, Elaine's godfather, and other band members).

Father's influences included Ella Fitzgerald and Duke Ellington. Father needed a singer so at age 17 she joined him. She learned her craft in the working men's club of Northern England, Buxton, Birmingham, etc. Would take the train up for 16 shows. Mike Yarwood and Englebert Humperdink were also in the clubs. Originally wanted to be a classical pianist.

Father took her to Archer St. She remembers how crowded it was, with musicians pulling out their diaries, some wearing formal, carrying their instruments, blocking traffic.

**Work:**

Fig Lewis, her father's agent, took her on. Didn't need a second back up job.

Colin Beaton (Shirley Basset's musical director) was a mentor. Elaine now mentors.

Abbey Lincoln, also a mentor (1963). She was an American jazz vocalist. She was a civil rights activist beginning in the 1960s

Salt Club (Regent's St)

Astor Club (Berkeley Square)

Embassy Club

Stork Club (1960) with their pianist for 20 years.

Ronnie Scott's (ladies of the night with their gentlemen – but Elaine would not sit with customers)

Beauty Jazz Festival (1963) in Her Majesty's Theatre understudy for Beverley Todd.

Benny Carter tour

Michelle Le Grande duet

Guest spots on the 2 Ronnies and Morcombe and Wise.

Lena Horn songs

Member of Equity. Never joined the Musician's Union.

**Theatre:**

Cowardy Custard (1971), book and lyrics by Noel Coward

Bubbling Brown Sugar (1978 – 9)

No Strings

Finian's Rainbow

The Wiz

Map of The World (National Theatre with Diane Quick and Bill Nye)

**Work ethic:**

Music is her driving force. Musicians shouldn't marry because "music is a hard mistress".

Do not drink or smoke as a singer. "Joy" is thinking on one's feet and winning over an unresponsive audience.

Every performance is a learning curve: learning to program the set, how to dress, how to hold one's own. Can't be shy in the dressing room. Cabaret taught her to look into the camera.