

HOME PAGE | MY TIMES | TODAY'S PAPER | VIDEO | MOST POPULAR | TIMES TOPICS | Log In | Register Now | Subscribe to The Times | TimesPeople

The New York Times **Music**

Arts All NYT

WORLD | U.S. | N.Y. / REGION | BUSINESS | TECHNOLOGY | SCIENCE | HEALTH | SPORTS | OPINION | ARTS | STYLE | TRAVEL | JOBS | REAL ESTATE | AUTOS

ART & DESIGN | BOOKS | DANCE | MOVIES | **MUSIC** | TELEVISION | THEATER

MUSIC REVIEW

Betty Buckley, Aided by Kenny Werner, Takes the Jazz Challenge

By **STEPHEN HOLDEN**
Published: June 1, 2006

The longtime partnership of the Broadway diva [Betty Buckley](#) and the jazz pianist and arranger Kenny Werner makes as much theoretical sense as a wardrobe of purple and chartreuse. But somehow the tug of war between her theatricality and his jazz impressionism works to both their advantages.



Jennifer Taylor for The New York Times
Betty Buckley in her jazz-inflected show at the Blue Note.

When they perform in cabarets, Mr. Werner usually plays an obedient courtier to the queen, supplying minimal jazz filigree and New Age texture. But at the Blue Note, the New York jazz club where they are performing through Sunday (with Mr. Werner's band, Quintessence), the balance has shifted decisively.

Carefully decorated cabaret accompaniments have given way to spacious jazz landscapes through which Ms. Buckley, never one to shirk a challenge, romps with the excitement of a repressed tomboy who has exchanged her frilly dress for a riding outfit. Having fled the living room into the great outdoors, she unveils a hard swinging side of her complex musical personality, tearing into Billie Holiday's "Stormy Blues" with a ferocity that adds a notch to her belt of stylistic conquests.

Readers' Opinions

Forum: [Jazz](#)

The show leads off with an iconoclastic "Surrey With the Fringe on Top," whose tricky stop-start jazz arrangement over shifting rhythmic underpinnings evokes a bumpy ride over rough terrain. What follows is a musical obstacle course that challenges Ms. Buckley to remain in the saddle as she hurtles through the woods and over the hills. At Tuesday's opening night show Ms. Buckley remained not only upright but also confidently in charge.

Mr. Werner's elaborate arrangements expanded the songs' fields of vision and enhanced Ms. Buckley's intensely expressive readings. An elongated "Star Dust" sadly sifted through time and memory. "So Many Stars" drifted dreamily through space. Wailing solos by Todd Reynolds (on violin) and Billy Drewes (on reeds) on "Cry Me a River" underscored Ms. Buckley's take on this quintessential crow of vengeful rage, and "No One Is Alone" was transformed from a consoling childlike lullaby into a complicated grown-up assertion of compassion.

An encore of John Prine's "Angel From Montgomery," half-spoken and half-sung, burrowed as deeply into its narrator's despairing sensibility as any version I've heard; it cut to the bone.

Betty Buckley and Quintessence featuring Kenny Werner appear through Sunday at the Blue Note, 131 West Third Street, Greenwich Village, (212) 475-8592.

SIGN IN TO E-MAIL THIS
PRINT
SAVE



[More Articles in Arts »](#)

Books Update E-Mail

Sign up for the latest book reviews, sent every Friday.

[See Sample](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)

MOST POPULAR

1. Townies: Cat People Are People, Too
2. A Good Appetite: Fiber Meets Flavor in New Whole-Grain Pastas
3. Scientist at Work | Dr. Abraham Verghese: Physician Revives a Dying Art: The Physical
4. Nicholas D. Kristof: What Oman Can Teach Us
5. Bankers Ignored Signs of Trouble on Foreclosures
6. 18 and Under: Understanding 'Ba Ba Ba' as a Key to Development
7. Defying Predictions, Miners Kept Healthy
8. Rabbi Breaks With Paladino Over Apology
9. Education of a President
10. Can Paul Rabil Make Lacrosse Sexy?

[Go to Complete List »](#)

Black Domina	\$18	\$65	\$340	Odyssey	\$14	\$35	\$240
					15%	20%	14%
					THC	CBG	CBN

Not your average pot club

ALSO IN T MAGAZINE »

- Runway hair trends
- How to make a real mai tai

nytimes.com

T MAGAZINE

[More Articles in Arts »](#)