

# MARY FOSTER CONKLIN

## bio

Vocalist and radio host Mary Foster Conklin is an old school song hound, with a special talent for uncovering lesser known treasures of the Great American Songbook and performing them in nontraditional venues. Her smoky voice with a tart twist of lemon has been described as both recognizably traditional yet unmistakably contemporary, as she puts her personal stamp on a repertoire that spans over nine decades. "Scratch her witty tough-girl-from Jersey patter," wrote *The Washington Post*, "and you'll find a sensitive artist (but not frail) with a wide-ranging boldly colored voice and an open ear for off-beat material."

**MARY FOSTER CONKLIN** has appeared in theatres, jazz clubs, cabarets and even fire escapes in the metropolitan New York area and throughout the United States and Canada. She also hosts a weekly live radio show called "A Broad Spectrum – the Ladies of Jazz" celebrating women composers and lyricists on WFDU.FM on the HD2 channel Jazz and What's More.

A New Jersey native who came to New York to pursue theatre work, her transformation from actor to jazz singer began when she joined drummer/composer Art Lillard's 15-piece Heavenly Band and her song selections naturally shifted from show tunes to blues, Latin and bebop. As a leader, her sets are a mix of contemporary material and standards, with an emphasis on the lesser known treasures of the Great American Songbook. In New York, Conklin's talents have earned her a place on the stages of The Blue Note, Zinc Bar, Iridium, Birdland, the Kitano and Cornelia Street Cafe. She can also be seen from time to time singing off various fire escapes as The Lady in the Red Dress with the Renegade Cabaret. Her latest project, LIFE IS A BITCH - a tribute to Beat poet/lyricist Fran Landesman, (best known for "Spring Can Really Hang You Up the Most" and "The Ballad of the Sad Young Men") has been praised by the New York Times as "full of salt and vinegar -- with the intensity and tough humor of someone who might have lived on the bohemian fringe in the late '40s and '50s, when the word 'hip' meant something."

On the West Coast she has performed in Los Angeles at the In House Jazz Series, Vitello's, the Gardenia and the Jazz Bakery. She has appeared in Chicago at the Cultural Center and in Palm Beach, Florida at the Royal Room. Ms. Conklin was awarded the 2010 MAC Award for Jazz Vocalist by the Manhattan Association of Cabarets and Clubs, and has been praised by The New York Times as "a highly creative singer whose style blends cabaret and jazz so thoroughly as to defy any easy categorization." Her debut CD, Crazy Eyes, was listed as one of the ten best CDs of 1998 by In Theatre Magazine, and won the 1999 Bistro Award presented by Backstage Magazine for Outstanding Recording. Her second recording, You'd Be Paradise, was released in September 2001 to critical acclaim, worldwide airplay and was a jazz bestseller for two years on www.CDBaby.com.

Why the song search mission? Several years ago, what began as a simple quest for some lesser known Matt Dennis material (West Coast songwriter best known for his hits "Angel Eyes" and "Violets for your Furs") quickly became an all-out obsession. She began her search at the Library of Congress, then teamed up with Los Angeles singer/songwriter Mark Winkler to present a bi-coastal tribute to Matt Dennis and Bobby Troup. Blues For Breakfast - Remembering Matt Dennis (Rhombus Records) became an award winning third CD, hailed by the press as "delightfully dramatic" (Jazz Times) "a work of art and heart" (powerlineblog.com), and "an overdue reminder of the honored place of Matt Dennis in American music" (Jazz Society of Oregon). Her latest CD, Photographs, released in February 2016, puts a personal spin on a collection of standards and contemporary tunes by Oscar Brown, Jr., Benny Carter, Lennon and McCartney, Johnny Mandel and Joni Mitchell, with five tunes by Beat poet Fran Landesman.

## Critical Acclaim

"Like her earlier recordings, this one [Photographs] is full of one magic moment after another. Her distinctive rich and dusky sound is completely captivating, conjuring up images of a film noir femme fatale. She is a supreme storyteller, and chooses songs that provide the kind of lyrics that lend themselves well to her approach." *Joe Lang Jersey Jazz*

"In style and dress, she looks as if she's stepped out of a 40's film noir nightclub scene. She sings like one of those swell chanteuses too -- sultry and languid and just a little mysterious. Somehow what could seem dated sounds right up to the minute." - *David Finkle, The Village Voice*

"Stylish without pretension, sexy without posturing, and tasteful without strict boundaries, Conklin is a jazz artist with that always hoped-for combination of musical chops and sensitivity to lyrics." *Barbara and Scott Siegel - THEATERMANIA.COM*

"A delightfully dramatic young singer whose third album amounts to a one-woman archeological survey subtitled 'Remembering Matt Dennis': 14 tunes, some familiar, many neglected. Obviously Mary Foster Conklin digs what she digs: her jazz chops are best displayed on 'Show Me the Way to Get Out of this World.'" *Harvey Siders, JazzTimes*

"Whatever you do with the rest of your life, take pains to hear Mary Foster Conklin sing 'Violets for you Furs.'" it's nothing less than a revelation." *Alan Bargebuhr, Cadence*