

Iliana Rose: The Servant of Emotion

by Sander Wolff 05.13.11

Iliana Rose performs regularly at McKenna's On The Bay and at the Sea Bird Jazz Lounge in downtown Long Beach, and she'll be playing at both this weekend. Her music is steeped in her Cuban heritage, but her influences range far and wide.



"I love Mozart and even named my cat after him," Rose said. "I love Rachmaninoff, Liszt and Leonard Cohen."

Her tastes don't stop there, however.

"I'm a big fan of Bette Midler," said Rose, "and I listen to lots of power ballads from the '80s."

Her love of music comes, at least in part, from her grandfather, who sang to her as a child.

"His specialty is decima guajira, a traditional form of Cuban folk music and poetry," explained Rose. "Decima is a form of poetry that my grandfather learned in Nuevitas, Camaguey, Cuba. He was a guajiro, a Cuban cowboy. They would recite the poems over a campfire, sometimes to music. He still sings to me over the phone!"

Rose can usually be found behind a piano, playing the amazingly complex syncopated rhythms while singing with her strong, full voice. She studied at the University of Miami, where she earned degrees in studio music, jazz voice, and clarinet performance. Still, her technical abilities are less important to her.

"When jazz began," Rose said, "it was very emotional and expressive. Over the years jazz has become very technical and abstract. When I play, I pay attention to my soul. I know in my heart that technique is the servant of emotion."

Iliana Rose will be performing on Saturday, May 14, at McKenna's On The Bay, and on Sunday at the Sea Bird Jazz Lounge. Her shows start at 6:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m., respectively.

More information about Iliana can be found at IlianaRose.com.