

Helen Sherrah-Davies - full bio (520 words):

After many years as a noted classical performer and educator in her native Britain, five-string violinist and composer Helen Sherrah-Davies relocated to Boston, graduated from Berklee College of Music Summa Cum Laude (with the "Most Valuable Player" award) and is currently pursuing her Masters in Contemporary Improvisation at the New England Conservatory. *StarStuff*, her debut recording as a leader, is the fruit of her remarkable transatlantic quest, the fulfillment of a vibrant and seasoned artistic vision.

Helen's original works are trans-stylistic, jazz-infected, with a dynamic electric and acoustic mix, full of unexpected tone colors and sonorities. Her musical landscapes focus on storytelling, bathing the listener in prisms of sound. Darol Anger, acclaimed fiddler, has described Helen's music as "so strong, it approaches the status of a new sentient being... Even in the most thorny, complex episodes, we are moved to care, laugh and rejoice, washed by waves of melodic love." Drawing on the improvisational freedom of jazz while incorporating rhythmic and formal devices from Bulgarian, Middle Eastern and other traditions, Helen follows a path of "eclectic inspiration, disparate sonic influences and the realm of the Imagination."

Helen began playing piano at age four, violin at age six. At age eight she won a scholarship to the prestigious Chetham's School of Music in Manchester, England. By 19 she earned performing diplomas on both instruments. She went on to an MA and PGCE at Cambridge University. Along with her activities as an educator (Bedales Junior School, St. Catharines School, Yehudi Menuhin School, The States of Jersey-Channel Islands), Helen pursued freelance orchestral work and regular string quartet performances, playing in venues such as Leeds Castle, the National History Museum and the Houses of Parliament (London). She spent two summers working in Italy with the Montepulciano Opera Festival Orchestra, performed at the wedding of "Posh Spice" Victoria to David Beckham in Ireland, worked with the singer Sam Brown and led a string quartet for Jon Lord (of Deep Purple) while performing his music in Zermatt, Switzerland.

Upon hearing jazz fiddler Mike Piggott in a Sussex pub, Helen became consumed with interest in improvisation, which her years of rigorous classical training did not address. She earned a Certificate and Diploma in Jazz and Popular Studies from Goldsmiths College, began performing and recording with artists such as Mike Hatchard, Herbie Flowers (Sky, T Rex) and guitarist Dylan Kay, and ultimately arrived in her current home of Boston, where she won praise from Mimi Rabson as "one of Berklee's most original voices."

Helen's stateside performing credits include Christiane Karam's Middle Eastern fusion band ZiLZALA, the Underground Jazz String Quartet, the drumming group Inanna and many other collaborations at such varied venues as the Institute of Contemporary Art, Museum of Fine Arts, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum and the National Composers Conference Atlanta (performing Kari Juusela's music). From September 2005 to May 2006 she led the Berklee String Orchestra, and she has twice won the honor of having her compositions featured in Women's Musicians Network concerts at Berklee Performance Center. In October 2009 she

played a well-received CD release concert for *StarStuff* at Ryles Jazz Club in Cambridge.