



Sophie Min

Artist Interview. September 26, 2021.



Sophie Min is a Meanjin based pianist making strides in the Australian Jazz scene as a fiercely prolific composer and improvisational artist.

She has an extensive touring career, playing many festivals and venues including Melbourne Women's International Jazz Festival, Brisbane International Jazz Festival, ABC Jazz, JMI, QPAC and more.

Sophie has released 5 full length albums since her debut in 2018 and has been nominated at the QLD Music Awards 3 years in a row for her composition.

Alongside her solo work she is also an extensive collaborator, releasing music as part of Min/Svoboda/Hawkins Trio, Shamin, Sophie Min Orchestra and is also a music teacher in her own right at the Queensland Conservatorium.

Connecting with music

Sophie Min & James Sherlock 'Thanks for the Hands' Album Launch PRO...



I started playing piano by myself when I was about 3 years old. Playing with other musicians began at church, in the classroom and choir at school. I have always thoroughly enjoyed playing in a bands and ensembles. I also learnt a bit of flute and guitar, but my main interest was always playing chords and figuring out adlibs between arrangements on piano. I started to take it seriously when I was preparing to get a formal tuition at Seoul Institute of the Arts. My family was always very supportive of my musical ambitions.

I was 9 or 10 when I began performing in front of other people and I started composing when I was 13. I began performing my own songs when I was about 20. I love performing because each time is unique. It's the one and only time that you can play that gig with that band on that day and it becomes a lifetime memory to cherish forever.

I've always been able to express my feelings through music, painting or writing more easily than through spoken words. I was a very quiet girl, but whenever I sat on the piano chair at church (because I didn't have a piano at home), I felt alive and joyful! I built my connections with the world through piano, so I'm very grateful that I was able to access music through my church community. They encouraged me so much and gave me the opportunity to always be on stage even when I was really young.

Jazz



I've played a lot of different genres over the years; classical, gospel, musical theatre, rock, k-pop... I've always liked listening to all types of music, I even played keyboard in a rock band when I was in high school! I initially connected to jazz because of the freedom. I was able to learn about improvising and once I continued to do so, I felt the most like myself in my music.

By collaborating with other artists, I've been able to magnify my musicianship, listening ability and communication. It allows me to grow and my music gets better. I'm so grateful to have such incredible musicians around me that allow me to play with them!

I like to duet with any instrument, but I would say my favourite duo setup is with Ben Shannon on drums.

Composing



'Slingstones' - Sophie Min & Steve Newcomb, IHRH



I sometimes start with a nonsense rhythm, and sometimes I want to make it really 'Sophie Min' from the get go. It depends on things like 'Who's going to be my audience?', 'What do I wanna achieve from it?', 'How long should it be?'... Then I might do sketching, note taking, listening and lots more questioning.

When I imagine the sound of a piece, I rehearse it a lot in my head before bringing it to the band. Then it's all about practice. I'll keep practicing the song until I feel comfortable rehearsing it with others. During rehearsals with my band I reflect on how everyone's playing affects the arrangement. I often write draft charts to run over til it sounds like what I hear in my mind.

My recent projects SHAMIN (experimental jazz duo) and my Sophie Min Orchestra have allowed me to explore my compositional practice in a secure environment, we can try anything out and go from there.

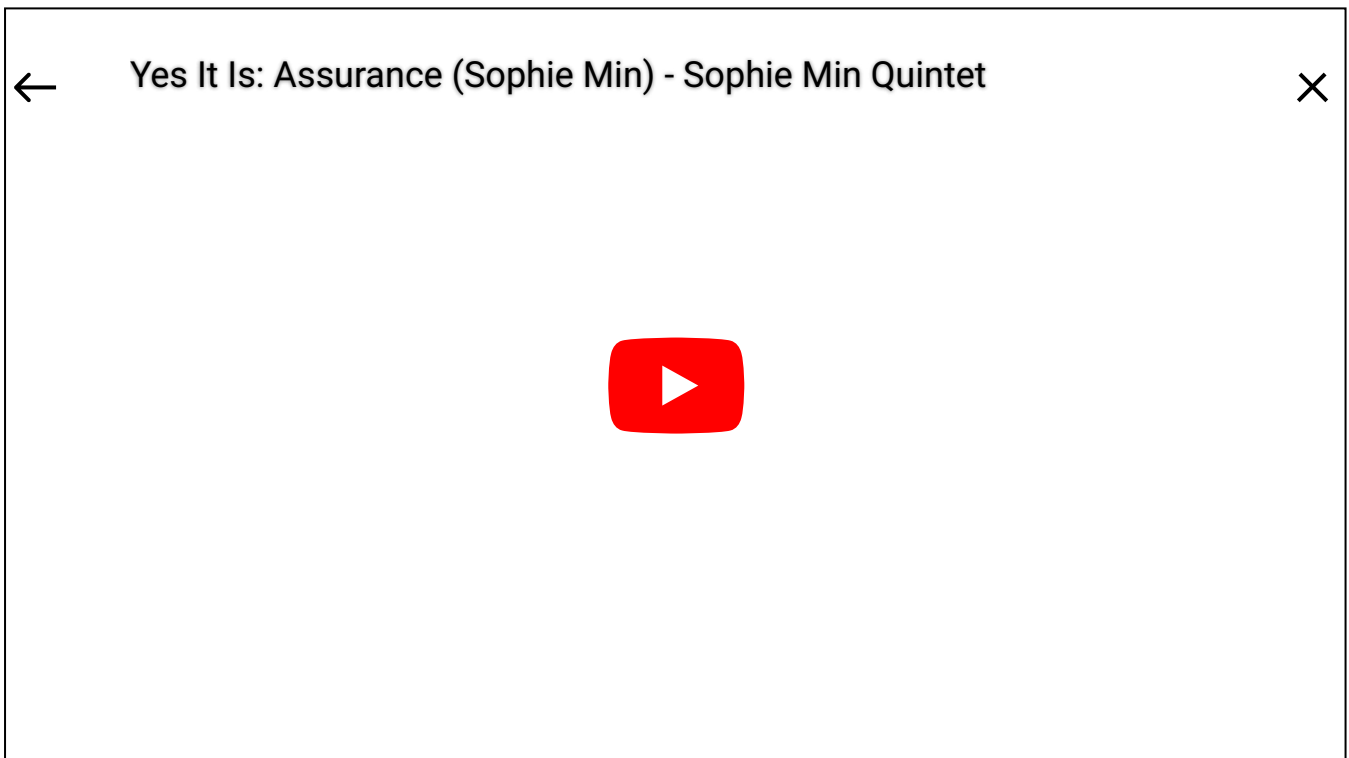
Improvisation



I started to improvise when I was playing at church. I was bored of playing the same patterns so I was always curious about how to make things sound interesting. I love improvising on the piano, it provides me with limitless opportunities to connect with the audience and other players.

When I improvise, it always reflects my current status - life, thoughts, emotions. I have to be myself and be there in the moment while I'm playing. I always want to be me, rather than someone else when I improvise.

Inspiration



Good art and music really inspires me to continue what I do. To name a few, I like Bill Evans, Keith Jarrett, Vijay Iyer, John Hollenbeck, Fred Hersch, Maria Schuneider, Thelonious Monk, Miho Hazama, Matt Mitchell, Herbie Hancock, Debussy, Bartok, Ligeti and so on.

Links

[Website](#)

[Bandcamp](#)

[Instagram](#)

[Soundcloud](#)