

The Songs of Our Souls: a Presentation

Overview

In this Zoom presentation developed by Mev Miller (Instigator/Lesbrarian of Wanderground), participants were treated to a tour of early Lesbian music from the 1970s to the early 1990s. During this program, special guests shared their experiences with the development of two recordings. Linda Shear, singer/songwriter/pianist, talked about creating her album *A Lesbian Portrait*. Sally Ann Hay reminisced about singing in the Amazon Chorus on Maxine Feldman's album, *Closet Sale*.

Summary

Wanderground Archives has LOTS of music – and much more on the way. The collection includes very early (and sometimes rare) LP-albums from the late 1970s, a smattering of cassette tapes, and thousands of CDs. All this makes up an eclectic representation of what's been known as "Women's Music" (but is really Lesbian)!

The presentation covered the years of early Lesbian music (1970) through 1999. References were made to recording labels, festivals, and Lesbian themes in the music. Though musicians from around the U.S. were included, a special effort was made to highlight performers from the New England region.

During this presentation, Mev Miller (Instigator/Lesbrarian) presented a brief herstory of this music and played many sound clips. A complete list of songs (not all included in the presentation) and links can be found in the attached song list.

Audio Quotes from Interview **or** Video Quotes from Interview

📺 – indicates video clip available

📺 Linda Shear – *A Lesbian Portrait* (2:20)



In this clip Linda offers her reflections about A Lesbian Portrait - an aspirational album For Lesbians Only

Mev: And now we're into 1976 and Linda Shear did an album that was called a Lesbian Portrait. And one of the things that I always found really exciting about it was on the front cover, right there, right in front of my face, Lesbian music for Lesbians only. And Linda happens to be with us this evening. So Linda, do you want to say something about that a little bit?

Linda Shear Thanks. Mev. You know, ever since you asked me to do it, I've been thinking about you asked me if I wanted to talk about the fact, and I'll keep it brief, why I did that. Lesbian separatism, I can't speak for all the Lesbian separatists back then, but for myself and the friends around me, it was it was aspirational. It was a protest against patriarchy. It was the recognition that we were building a culture, a new Lesbian culture that we needed separate space to do that. The album came out, I think, in '77 and I played in Michigan in '78 and in '79 and when I played in Michigan, I also had the concerts designated for Lesbians only. And again, aspirational. Nobody was being carded, nobody was being asked at the door when they bought the album if they were Lesbians. Nobody was being asked when they sat down in the concert in Michigan if they were Lesbians. But the idea was, we are entitled to the space. We are entitled to claim Lesbian space, and I wanted to participate in that claiming. And when my band, Family of Women, toured, and we tried to do Lesbian only concerts, and there was tremendous backlash, not only from the straight community, but from the women's community as well. And it was, it was a difficult, it was a difficult time. The Lesbian wars were difficult during the mid '70s. And I appreciate the fact that you have the album represented. And thank you for doing that, Mev.

Sally Hay and the Amazon Chorus (1:38)



and then we have Maxine. Somebody mentioned Maxine before, so we're going to, we're going to do a little Maxine the closet sale, and I'm going to invite Sally, if she's still here, to unmute yourself. Sally. Sally has a little story to tell about being in the Amazon chorus, right?

Sally: Well, if you look at the back of the album and the small print way down at the bottom, you'll even see my name. So I had just come out in '77 in Boston, and I have to admit, I did not know Maxine Feldman, but a good friend of mine was a good friend of hers, and my good friend was getting together a lot of lesbians to create a chorus to back up Maxine, because she was creating this album so that she could start sending it out as demos to radio stations and possible gigs or whatever. So I'm afraid I don't have a lot to tell you about Maxine,

other than she was just fabulous and fun, and we had just a crazy, crazy time. It was great camaraderie for me. The whole business of women coming together was just so new and fabulous. And, yeah, it was a great experience. And when I listened to the music, I cringed a little, but it was fun, and we were glad to support Maxine.

Thanks Sally, and Maxine also is from the New England area. She lived up in the Boston and Provincetown areas for many years, and she called herself a big, loud Jewish which Lesbian.

Related Items in Wanderground Collection

- Large selection of Albums, CDs and some cassettes
- Periodical Publications: Paid My Dues & Hot Wire
- Songbooks from several of the musicians as well as other books about festivals and women's music industry and artist memoirs or biographies and writings, including *Something About the Women*, Photos by Irene Young
- Website: Because of a Song - <https://becauseofasong.com/>
- Also: T-shirts, buttons, bumperstickers, music calendar, and festival memorabilia (esp. from NEWMR)

Details

- PowerPoint Presentation shared on Zoom: August 19, 2024
- Topic(s): Lesbian Music, Linda Shear, Maxine Fledman
- Date & How Recorded: Recorded via Zoom
- Presentation by: Mev Miller, Wanderground
- Transcript prepared by: No transcript. Song list available. Full video and be viewed: <https://youtu.be/-Qj74d5rNSY> – (edited version by Jamie Potter)
- Summary prepared by: Mev Miller