

## **MALOU BERG – Biography**

It's impossible to sum up Malou Berg's musical career in just a few sentences. Whether we are talking about singing, composing, touring or doing theater, she has a lot of musical and artistic experience.

In her creating, she proves that breadth and depth don't necessarily have to be mutually exclusive. While accessible, her music also reaches the corners of your soul.

In addition to music, Malou's interests include meditation, qi-gong, outdoor bathing, cooking and spending time with friends and family at home on the countryside in Östhammar, about an hour's drive from central Stockholm, where she grew up.

"I like it here. Even if I don't leave the house, I can see the grass outside – and that's enough for me", she says.

But let's not get ahead of ourselves.

Malou started singing and writing at an early age. At the age of 9, she was given a piano. Soon she composed an original piece of music. However, her joy was somewhat dampened when her mother stated that she couldn't possibly have written such music herself. "I didn't lose heart, but I was probably slightly offended, considering the fact that I still can remember it so well. My mother didn't realize my abilities until others told her that I had talent", Malou remembers.

At the age of 15, she started performing as a troubadour – today, the young Malou would probably be referred to as a singer-songwriter.

"I sang and played guitar. The songs were kind of introverted. I didn't communicate with the listener, hardly even with myself", Malou smiles. She also started painting around this time.

Her first breakthrough came in 1974. A result of "meditation and inspiration", she says.

In 1977, she reached the Swedish final of the Eurovision Song Contest as one half of the duo, Greta and Malou, thus getting to experience what it was like to become a celebrity. A hectic time followed, full of chart positions, extensive touring, and a lot of media attention.

When Great and Malou went their separate ways, Malou focused on writing her own music. She participated in and composed music for cabaret and theater and acted in several movies and TV series. She wrote the music for a number of radio shows for children. The lyrics were written by Bengt Carlsson, who also wrote the lyrics for her first solo album.

In 1982, after having been awarded a scholarship for Berklee College of Music in Boston by the Swedish Songwriters' Association for Performing Rights, she decided to lend her voice to the gospel genre. A close collaboration with lyricist, Susanne Wigforss, followed. Among other things, they wrote a number of gospel songs, earning awards from Billboard Song Contest three years in a row.

The critics raved about her voice, saying it had "both body and soul", was "ready-made for gospel", "mighty", and "heartwrenchingly beautiful".

"I really felt that I had come home. My voice suited the genre. After 11 years, however, I was getting tired of the genre, and some of the more religiously rigid people surrounding it".

At the same time, she wasn't compelled to compete with the pop acts of the day.

"Modern pop has its merits, but I often find it too fragmented. It's mostly hook after hook, often co-written by a large number of writers. Even if they are good at putting it together, I can often miss a sense of flow, and that personal fingerprint".

Something new was growing inside Malou. In 1989, she started working on "Den inre vägen" (The Inner Path), a sacred musical piece for three soloists, choir and string quartet. The piece received spectacular reviews, and was performed at several triumphant concerts.

A few years later she was ready for her next musical adventure, which led her onto a whole new world. "Hoya" was born. It was a new kind of world music with an imaginary 'Pleiadian' language, percussion, didgeridoo and voices. It was the first part of a series of "LightSongs" that would regularly emerge, each time with more conviction and power.

When Malou finds that flow, the songs appear when they feel like it - not necessarily when she sits at her piano.

"They run through my head, over and over, until I have time to record them on my phone. Later, I can return to them, take care of them, and provide them with fitting clothes, if one can put it like that".

When the album "Hoya" was released, it received great reviews. Malou toured with two singers performing songs from the album.

The follow-up album, "Omine", had a more meditative tone, and was released in 2005. "Amaona" was characterised by a water theme, and was released three years later.

Malou's album "Alignment", number four in The Pleiadian Suite, was released in 2010 and has received great reviews, just as the next album, "Breathe Out, which consisted of recycled and remixed songs from the albums of The Pleiadian Suite. Ma Yema, released in 2016 had the theme fire. "Restful", a compilation album with a Christmas feel, consisted of songs from every album in the suite.

At her hometown Östhammar's Literary Society's Word Festival in 2009 Malou Berg was awarded that year's Word Prize. The motivation said "...for having created her own sensual and music language – Pleiadian. She also has the ability to help others express themselves in the words that are sung, and enjoy them".

That same year, Malou was invited as the main feature by the South Korean annual HwaEom Spirit Music Ritual, with artist and musician being invited from all over the world. There, she performed songs from "Hoya" together with a choir and local musicians who played traditional instruments.

"The singers were supposed to learn and rehearse the entire HOYA album in less than three days, whether they had experience from singing in a choir or not, and perform it on the third day. The title track consisted of one single word that was meant to be sung in many different ways. Of course everything looked the same in the sheet music, so the poor singers had nothing to go by. Good thinking on my part. Thanks, Malou!" she says, with a self-affacing grin.

Several important music business representatives in Asia showed interest in releasing Malou's music and "Hoya" was released in Taiwan and South Korea. In Japan and China, however, the people who had taken on the project of releasing her music had left, or moved to other positions within the company before any release could take place.

Malou's most recent project is "LighTSongs", long songs that were meant to be sung collectively, like a new type of mantra songs. They were recorded between 2016 and 2023, and were recently released as a triple cd, housed in a beautiful box set.

The material on "LightSongs" didn't come tapping politely on Malou's shoulder.

"Definitely not", she smiles. "They arrived noisily, whether I was in the bath, in my

car, out walking, or somewhere else. They just arrived. 'Hello! Here we are. Write us down and record us!' There was no room for doubt".

"If I try to separate the songs, they protest. They didn't even want to be presented in the order I'd originally envisaged", Malou smiles, fully aware that the way she attributes songs their own free will may sound a tad unorthodox.

"I work within a genre that doesn't really exist", she says. "There is no 'column' where it fits. Some call it experimental, even though the music itself feels very natural. Others refer to it as world music, but I prefer the term 'global music', since it's performed in a language that doesn't have to be understood intellectually, and is therefore universal. The music is as 'free' as instrumental music. I was happy to hear a person say 'I don't understand a word, and yet I get it all'".

A restaurant owner, said 'almost all music is like going through an apartment with different rooms. Your music is like a walk in the woods. On the surface, everything looks the same all the ingredients are there, but if you look closer, everything changes all the time, appearing in various combinations".

You could even call the music instrumental, she adds. "I would argue that the human voice IS an instrument. It's also part of the body in a way that no other instrument can be. Singing is my life, my language, and my connection to life itself".

"LightSongs" is a work of art. The music, the pictures, and the stories of how the songs came to be create a whole. Also, the CD preserves nuances and frequencies that are missing from music provided by almost every streaming service.

2024 has arrived and it's time for "LightSongs" to reach a wider audience, not just in South Korea and China. She's already received a lot of love from those who have already listened. People have written letters, telling Malou that the songs have brought comfort and solace.

"I can relate, because I feel the same. The music is mild. Its goal is to help ease friction or some kind of blocking. Most people have enough friction in their lives as it is. The music can be an open hand. One of the songs is directed to myself, and every time I hear it, I cry".

Sometimes Malou wonders why she didn't choose to make music that's more commercial.

”But the thing is, this music chose me. I would never have wanted to be without the flow that appears when the songs come knocking. I’ve already reached inner success. I just wish that it would be balanced out by a more measurable kind of success. I’m not after becoming rich, going on a huge tour, or in being a ”celebrity” again. But it would be great to feel that my songs have reached their potential audience. Sometimes I don’t know where to start, how to express myself to create an interest. Most of all, I just want to say ”listen!”.

In recent years, Malou have had some serious problems with her voice.

”I was the source of a lot of grief, I was devastated to feel that my voice was a wounded bird. People gave me the advice to focus on other creative outlets, like painting or writing a book. But singing is my life”.

Today, everything is moving in the right direction, and Malou has spent part of the spring of 2024 at a writers’ retreat that was very inspiring. There, she started working on a book of thoughts.

Simultaneously, her songs are reaching new listeners, entering a new phase. The material on ”LightSongs” would work very well in a movie or in a television series, an area that is yet to be fully explored.

A instructional book for choirs and other people who want to enter the world of her LightSongs is also on the way, as is a project where smaller groups of singers will sing on camera, so that the songs can be presented for those interested.

Malou is back.