



# Malene Mortensen

**1982-2002.** Malene is the daughter of two musicians, drummer and musicteacher Karen Mortensen and trumpet player and composer Jens Winther. Malene grew up as an only child with her mother in Copenhagen, at first in Christiania, later at Christianshavn. Yet in 1991 they moved to Elsinore, Karen Mortensen being headhunted to the post as chief musicteacher at IPC - International People's College.

Karen Mortensen passed away 1993 after two years struggle against the cancer. As a tough consequence of this 11-year-old Malene moved back to the City of Copenhagen. The custody over Malene was given to Karen's friend from the students days at the Royal Danish Academy of Music, Birthe Skou, teacher of music theory and ear training. When Malene was 11 years old and to the age of 16, she - the little girl with the big voice - sang out her grief in The Children's Choir of the Royal Danish Academy of Music. Through the years she was given many solo assignments.

At the tender age of 12 Malene was the vocalist in the kid's rock band, "Rocking Rabbits" under the leadership of blues singer Chaeg. At the same time she took piano lessons at Hanne Mulvad's. Malene had never played classical music before; Hanne Mulvad had never taught children. But the experiment was a success. During those 6 months Malene learned to play about 30 little piano pieces by Bach, Satie og Bartok. When she was in 8th and 9th grades at her grammar school, Malene and two female schoolmates formed a gospel trio and regularly performed for private gatherings. Malene entered Sankt Annae Gymnasium (SAG) - the Copenhagen high-school for youngsters with musical talent - in 1998. She tackled the MGK curriculum, the standard three-year course of study combined with a three-year musical program, and graduated in just four years with a dual diploma.

In the spring of 1999 she won second prize in Berlinske Tidende newspaper's music competition. Later that year she gave a solo performance of the gospel song "Ever Smiling Liberty" with the SAG Choir and following the event she was booked to sing the song at several spots in Denmark. Malene also appeared numerous times on Copenhagen stages as a soloist with the SAG Big Band. She sang with various jazz and pop groups in the first two years of high school. And occasionally she made a guest appearance in her father's band, "Jens Winther Quintet".

**2002.** A virtually unknown high-school student, Malene sang her way into Danish hearts when she won the Danish Eurovision song Contest February 2002 with the song, "Tell Me Who You Are". By that time, however, she had already drawn a lot of attention on the Danish Broadcasting Corp's song contest, "Stjerne For En Aften," (akin to the British "Pop Idol") in December 2001 when she was first runner-up with the song, "Sing It Back."

The springtime 2002 was a busy time for Malene. She was continuously exposed in the Danish media. She participated in The Eurovision Song Contest in Tallinn, her MGK and high-school exams had to be passed, and there were concerts and a CD project. Despite the hectic schedule Malene capped off her high-school career in June 2002 by earning a 'lucky' 13 - the rarely-awarded superlative of the school grading system - in her major area of study, singing.

September 2002 jazz pianist and -producer Niels Lan Doky heard Malene sing at their common old school, SAG, and immediately he approached her. Things developed in a musical collaboration: in the fall 2002 Malene Mortensen, Niels Lan Doky, Anna Lia Bright and Michael Sunding wrote together and individually 9 catchy pop songs and developed Karen Mortensen's "Aftenkanon" (now "Evensong"). December 9, 2002 Malene was signed by Universal Music, and she spent 2 weeks in Paris December-January pre-recording her first album "Paradise" at Doky's Studio.

**2003 "Paradise"**. Medio January Malene rehearsed a couple of days with some of Denmark's finest musicians, **Niels Lan Doky, Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen** and **Alex Riel** at NHØP's. Ultimo January and Primo February the recordings took place in Focus-studio. Malene's debut solo album, "Paradise", was released September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2003.

Niels Lan Doky:

*"... I feel that we've managed to create an album that shows and confirms the fact that Malene is a vocalist of international class and a talent of the highest order."*

**2003-06 THE VOICE.** The joy of music and the sense of making the music swing were given to Malene by her mother. Through inheritance and environment she has always had a sure intuition and opinion about how to phrase a song. And 6 years in The Children's Choir at Margrethe Enevold's included a fabulous mixture of play and discipline. Regarding technique, Malene has been taken care of - since before high-school - by **Anne Rosing-Schow**, voice coach par excellence, Here at Rosing-Schow's Malene has learned the vocal craft, that is to build up and maintain her instrument, the voice. Via educational institutions Malene has had other teachers: Graulund, Ørsager, Trøjgaard and Cameron, but they have all had a line to Rosing-Schow.

Occasionally, Malene has been in drama-classes, among these and most fruitful was logically the coaching by Anne Rosing-Schow and actress Terese Damsholt at the same time.

Thus Malene has a strong voice and output allowing her to penetrate over and above e.g. a big band, as well as she can throw the mike away and fill up a room acoustically ad libitum.

**2003-06 ALBUMS.** Since the song contests in the winter 2002-03 Malene has contributed to quite a few album-releases, starting with the actual competitors and subsequently compilations.

Malene sang a duet with James Sampson on his first album, "James" in 2002, and in 2006 with Benni Chawes on his latest album, "Up Close".

Malene's first solo album, **"Paradise"**, is remarkable, because she has recorded with some of the greatest jazz musicians in Denmark. She is singing marvellously on this album, but neither the marketing nor the sale were remarkable. Subsequently Universal Music did not wish to exercise the options in the contract. The company did not feel, that they could do anymore for Malene, and they chose to stop the collaboration between the parties; so Malene was set free January 2004.

Immediately after this Malene and Kasper Villaume Trio contributed to the Danish jazz- gala-success at Midem in Cannes. Peter Littauer, general manager of record company "Sundance", heard Malene sing at this event, and in the light of this experience he had - as a provisional plan - a standard-jazz-album, when he signed Malene and Kasper August 2004. The dynamite between the young vocalist developing rapidly, the qualified producer/ arranger and the sensitive manager, not afraid to give space to creativity and spontaneity, subsequently added an extra dimension to the album.

Outside "Sundance", but with their approval, Malene went to Kiminova Studio July 2004 to record "RLQ Raasted/Lund Quartet feat. Malene Mortensen", an album containing fine modern original jazz-compositions by flutist Jens Erik Raasted and pianist Christian Lund - PLUS - **"Aarestrup i marts"** (Aarestrup in March), Malene's beautiful music to the romantic lyrics in Danish.

**"Date With A Dream"**, Malenes second solo album, is also a jazz album. With **Kasper Villaume p** and **Morten Lund tr** the level once again is high Danish jazz top elite, here with a lower average age than concerning "Paradise", and once again with a famous bassist: here the Israel/American **Avishai Cohen**, especially known from Chick Corea's "New Trio".

The recordings took place January-February 2005. There was already plenty of musical material: songs from Malene's fruitful collaboration with Anna Lia Bright and Michael Sunding in 2002-04, the treasure chest full of standards and last but not least the new songs written by Malene and her new co-writer and friend from the conservatory, pianist Magnus Hjorth.

The final outcome ended up with 50-50 of standards and original compositions inclusive a ballade by Avishai Cohen with lyrics by Malene and another friend from the conservatory, Marianne Sogaard Andersen. With **"Date With A Dream"** released April 2005, distributed to 20 countries and with 30 000 sold albums Malene is reaching her international breakthrough.

**"Malene"** - the third solo album - is in production as this is written. Release November 16<sup>th</sup>, 2006.

**2003-2006 CONCERTS.** In the last 3 years Malene has given 150 concerts, 80 in 2006. Which is not so bad for a solo jazz vocalist. But Malene just likes to extend the jazz with elements from pop, soul and R'n'B. She has the ability to reach a wide public at the same time as she more and more is being recognized as one of the new Danish jazz divas. Obviously with this potential Malene has quite a few and various jobs. She has played concerts in Denmark and abroad with her own orchestras, **Malene Mortensen Group** and **Malene Mortensen - Magnus Hjorth Duo**, as well as with different trios, especially Kasper Villaume Trio, and she has performed as a guest solo vocalist in many different musical combinations. (See malenemortensen.com , BIO/CV, LONG UK). In the middle of this extensive concert activity Malene decided primo May 2006 to quit The Rhythmic Music Conservatory, RMC after almost 2 years studies. The puzzle between the school and the gigs had become too complicated.

Despite the fact, that every concert so to speak is a culmination, Malene yet wants to underline her collaboration with big bands, from more amateur-like big bands as Holbæk Big Band via different events with Tivoli Big Band to a concert-tour with Jens Winther & Danish Radio Big Band ultimo January-primo February 2005: 7 concerts in Denmark celebrating DRBB's 40 years in business. Malene sang the 3 vocal movements of JW's suite for DR Big Band. With her friend, Marianne Sogaard Andersen, Malene had written the lyrics to her father's music. Specially remarkable was a very beautiful tribute to saxophonist Bent Jaedig, who passed away June 2004. Malene appeared as a guest soloist at these concerts. And at the Bent Jaedig Prize presentation 2006 at Copenhagen Jazz House 18 October 2006, Malene was asked by the widow Tove Enevoldsen to sing this "Dear Bent" on that special evening - Bent's 71 years birthday.

Every summer at Aarhus International Jazz Festival Klüver's Bigband - true to tradition - will take the stage accompanied by a guest soloist, this year the choice was Malene. The band found that many of Malene's groovy songs were suited for the big band sound. 4 of Malene's songs were arranged - and played at the gigs: "Mystery Man" by Matt Harris , "Blur" and "Crashed" by Jesper Riis and "Egyptian Moonlight" by Nikolaj Boegelund. Malene loves big band - and ditto.

May 2006 Malene was stand-in for Susanne Palsbøll at a concert with Jørgen Emborg's orchestra, "Moonsong". Emborg's compositions are very cantabile, but "tricky" in his totally unique, Nordic tone. He knew, that he could count on Malene, concerning form and harmony. But she took him by surprise, when he realized, that at a very short notice she had learned the whole repertoire by heart!

After the release of the third solo album **"Malene"** November 16<sup>th</sup>, 2006 Malene goes on a Germany-Austria Tour with Malene Mortensen Group: Morten Ankarfeldt (bas), Hans Hvidberg (tr), Jacob Christoffersen or Magnus Hjorth (piano). Last concert on this tour is Quasimodo, Berlin, 2 December, and the following evening, **3 December 2006, at Copenhagen Jazzhouse, Malene is going to present - for the first time in Denmark - the music from her 3. album "MALENE".**

**2006 – Malene:** Since 2007 the personnel in Malene's band has consisted of four friends from Copenhagen's Rhythmic Conservatory: Carl Mörner-Ringström (guitar), Magnus Hjorth (piano), Petter Eldh (bass) and Snorre Kirk (drums). Together they have played over 100 concerts in Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Germany, Britian, France, Poland and not least in Asia. In the same year Malene is releasing her fourth album "Malene"

**2009 – Agony & Ecstasy:** Her fifth solo album is released in September 2009. This album is very special because all the songs are written by Malene herself, and some songs co-written with the musicians in her band. The genre of the music is a fusion between pop, rock and jazz.