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ALLYSON'S JAZZ WONDERLAND

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What would jazz saxophonist and composer Wayne Shorter make of vocalist Karrin Allyson's interpretation of his trademark tune "Footprints?" Had he attended Allyson's performance at the Kennedy Center's Terrace Theater on Friday night, one can't help but think he would have contributed to the evening's loudest ovation.

Like several other jazz classics heard during the opening set, "Footprints" was enhanced by a fresh lyric composed by Chris Caswell. The tune, the title track on Allyson's upcoming album, with its languid melody and now bittersweet refrain ("Follow the footprints we left and I'll find you there"), revealed the singer's soulful way with a ballad, quiet and haunting.

Part of the fun of listening to Allyson, however, is hearing how gracefully she moves from ballads and bop to contemporary pop and bossa nova. A classically trained pianist, she briefly demonstrated her keyboard skills during the opening set, accompanying herself during a rendition of Jimmy Webb's "The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress" that sounded as if it were arranged for a vintage film noir soundtrack. She also teamed up with pianist Bruce Barth during a delightful four-hand arrangement of Hank Mobley's "The Turnaround," which boasted another engaging, if comparatively slight, Caswell lyric.

Allyson's finely tuned musicality, though, was even more evident when she was singing, whether scatting at a breakneck tempo, nimbly delivering a lyric in Portuguese or engaging in swift, perfectly pitched exchanges with guitarist Rod Fleeman. In addition to benefiting from Fleeman's blues-inflected touch, Allyson received inspired support from Barth, bassist Bob Bowman and the remarkably resourceful drummer Victor Lewis.