

**A Conversation with Joy Eden Harrison
by Frank Goodman (2/2006, Puremusic.com)**

One of the main purposes for beginning Puremusic five years ago was to bring to greater exposure great artists lingering or thriving in the non-corporate shadow. The next big shadow came from the non-corporate world itself. Affordable recording and the Internet's mechanism for theoretically marketing one's self has created a lethal bottleneck in the indie musical world, congested too often by acts much more adept at booking and relentless self-promotion than they are at music itself. When you add this congestion of mediocrity to the onslaught of computers, videos, the meteoric rise of gaming and the global love affair with the Internet, it's small wonder that the music business and especially live music finds itself in a perilous predicament.

Some superlative artists we know continue to make records and do some touring, but without putting too many eggs in that basket, and this will surely be a growing trend. For many, the biggest question will be at what point they make that turn, and what alternatives for mental, spiritual and fiscal survival present themselves. 'Twas ever thus, really, but these are the latest twists in an age old story.

Joy Eden Harrison is a great artist that we ran into some years back. We were very taken with her CD *Unspoken* in 2003, and it went on to win her the Best Jazz Artist for that year by the Independent Music Awards, with some very distinguished judges on the panel. But the praise arrived at the same time as the walls the artist was beginning to run into. Joy's search for equanimity led to teaching school, and continuing to play and write, but to ease off it for a while and strike a new balance.

She is a very singular voice of unique allure, as a writer and a singer. Her story is colorful, and her presence compelling, personally and artistically. Her new record, *Blue Venus*, blends the jazzy atmosphere of her previous work with ambient and electronic influences that open up the top end of the sound beautifully. We're big fans of this artist, and encourage you to check out the clips on the Listen page, as well as the clips of *Unspoken*, also linked at the end of the interview.

Joy Eden Harrison is potent; the sound is sophisticated, but her voice is intoxicating.

Puremusic: I love the new record.

Joy Eden Harrison: Great.

PM: Yeah, I mean, that was no surprise to me. I'm a big fan of your work. And pardon me if I take this opportunity to find out more about you, something I've always wanted to do. You're kind of a woman of mystery, the details are not exactly what you'd call forthcoming.

[laughter]

JEH: Okay.

PM: So if I may, let's begin with your very interesting beginnings, coming up on the Lower East Side, in what sounds like a very Bohemian style.

JEH: Yeah. Well, my parents are both artists. At that time, it was my father. And they were involved in a very artistic and political community in New York City. And I have three older brothers, so it was a little bit chaotic in the early years, but pretty exciting. I know all my life we've sort of had a train of interesting visitors coming through the household. That was true in New York City, especially with musicians. I wish I had a memory that was clear enough at such a young age to remember the details of the music that I heard. But I do remember the inspiration to play, that it started that.

PM: Yeah. And in the bio it said people as illustrious as Don Cherry, Archie Shepp, and, on the other hand, Sonny Terry, all came to your loft for peace rallies, and so forth.

JEH: Yeah, yeah. They were very connected in that time. A lot of artists were connected to the political movement, and anti-war, other issues, which is good. Artists had a voice. And I think that's true today, but not in as unified a manner as it was in the '60s.

PM: Yeah. There seem to be some attempts by artists to be politically active and aware, but as you say, it's not near the coalition that it was in those days.

JEH: Yeah.

PM: So is one to assume that in those days your parents were into progressive jazz on the one hand, and country blues on the other, or that--

JEH: Oh, oh, absolutely. My parents were open to everything. In fact, my mother was a guitar player, a folk guitar player. And she loved not only the country blues, but also Irish folk music and music of the British Isles, Scottish music, et cetera, and a big fan of--let me see if I can get this right--Tommy Makem--

PM: Oh, Tommy Makem, sure.

JEH: --the Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem.

PM: Yeah, growing up in Yonkers in an Irish-American household, those are certainly familiar names to me.

JEH: Yeah.

[laughter]

JEH: So I learned to sing a lot of political songs, too, when I was quite young, due to my mom's influence.

PM: Are you folks still around?

JEH: Yeah, they are. They are, and living in California, where I spent most of my growing up. And they're still very active artists.

PM: Wow. Are they in the San Diego area, or--

JEH: No. They've recently moved up to the Bay Area. They're in Santa Cruz.

PM: Santa Cruz, beautiful. I've done a lot of years up there in Marin and Sonoma Counties.

JEH: Ooh, nice.

PM: Totally nice. So your parents are still together, as well?

JEH: Yes, one of the few.

PM: Yeah, right. What about your brothers, all older, as you say?

JEH: Yeah.

PM: Are they all still around, and what are they up to?

JEH: Well, my oldest brother is a doctor, and my next oldest brother is a filmmaker, and my next oldest brother is an architect.

PM: Well, that's quite a reputable bunch.

JEH: Well, they went into creative fields, I guess. That was kind of part of our family tradition.

PM: Wow. So what was it like growing up the only girl and the youngest child, to boot, especially in what seems to amount to a big one-room loft?

JEH: Ah, well, that was pretty crowded. But we left that by the time I was five.

PM: Oh, okay.

JEH: Yeah. We did a small stint in New Mexico, and then moved to California.

PM: I see. Interesting. What were you like in your early years, and then in your high school years? What kind of a person were you in the early part of your life?

JEH: That is such an interesting question. Let me think back. I was pretty solitary. I always had a few close friends, but I liked to spend a lot of time alone, thinking. And I always played music. From the time I was five, I was in guitar lessons. I got the first, I think, when I was three, but I would just bang around, playing with my mom. But by five I got my first guitar. So I would spend a lot of time solo on it.

PM: Wow.

JEH: And then I started to write--nothing interesting, but writing just really appealed to me. By high school I was writing very corny love songs, young love.

PM: And did the other kids know that you played? Like would you play in talent shows or so forth?

JEH: A little bit, but not really. I wasn't as public with it then as I got after high school. I played with friends. Or I wrote songs for friends--maybe they were going away, for a year or something, and I'd write them a song as a goodbye present, things like that.

PM: Wow. But you didn't get into bands or anything in your school years?

JEH: No, I wasn't really into bands at that time.

PM: And did you come through a folk and country blues period?

JEH: Well, yeah, I did. I was a huge fan of Mississippi John Hurt, and Gary Davis.

PM: I think John Hurt taught us all to play the guitar.

JEH: Yeah. [laughs] Elizabeth Cotton, too. One of the first songs I ever learned was "Freight Train."

PM: And who knew that she played it left-handed upside down.

JEH: Exactly.

PM: Yeah, nobody. It's a lot harder like that, I should think.

JEH: But the first time I remember hearing jazz that really impacted me as a person, I think I was eight years old. But when it made me know that jazz was part of my bones was at a party with my parents. And there was a stand-up bass player, and a woman singing. She just seemed--at once it seemed so wild and out of control, and at the other times it seemed so intricate and engaged in the harmonies, that it sort of had this balance of groundedness and flight. And I really loved it. So at that point I knew that jazz was going to be part of my language, I just wasn't sure how.

PM: It's so interesting that an experience like that can trigger a lifetime of dedication. And yet, frequently those experiences, one looks back and says, "Well, I don't know even who that woman was."

JEH: Exactly. [laughs]

PM: And is that true for you? You don't know who she was?

JEH: No.

PM: Wow.

JEH: But I owe her a debt of gratitude.

PM: Just nobody knew at the time. It's amazing.

PM: So when you did your schooling, it was in California?

JEH: Yes.

PM: What part?

JEH: San Diego.

PM: Well, that's a nice place to be from.

JEH: Yeah.

PM: Did any of your brothers play?

JEH: My oldest brother played.

PM: The doctor?

JEH: Yes. He's about eight years older than I am. And we started at the same time. I was five and he was thirteen. And another brother played the trumpet. So we all dabbled. In

fact, when I was starting out, I tried the clarinet and the violin and the piano also, but I just ended up staying with the guitar. And my oldest brother stayed with the guitar. And he still plays for fun and family.

PM: And are you close with your family, the brothers and the folks?

JEH: Oh, absolutely, absolutely. Very close.

PM: At what point did you decide that you would go to music school?

JEH: I guess I was in college and I was studying a lot of different things.

PM: Where were you doing that?

JEH: I actually went to UC Santa Cruz. And I started out in theater, and then went into environmental studies, environmental science. And then, by the last year in school--I don't know where I heard this, again, but it had a great impact on me--somebody said, "You need to spend your life doing what you love." And I heard that, and I dropped everything from school--finished up, of course, and then just went to music school. I said, "That's it. I've got to be what I know is the deepest in my heart," and that was music.

PM: It's interesting to hear a fellow musician say, "Finished up, of course"--

JEH: [laughs]

PM: --when many musicians didn't finish up, of course. But that's part of your story, "I finished up, of course."

[laughter]

JEH: I guess that's being close to my family--"I had to finish up, of course"--the language.

[laughter]

PM: And so at some point you heard that from some source--that you need to spend your life doing what you love.

JEH: Yes.

PM: Do you know what kind of a source you heard that from? Was it a new age source or a school source, or a family source, or--

JEH: It was definitely in school, but it was a passing conversation, something that you wouldn't think would be so big. It wasn't like a lecture or a grand statement. It was sort of said in passing. But it struck me like an arrow.

PM: Yeah, I hear you. And so then being a Santa Cruz enrollee, it wasn't such a stretch when one decides, "Well, I think I'm just going to study music, that's, after all, what I'm into"--it wasn't such a stretch to get to Musicians Institute in L.A.

JEH: MI, exactly. I had taken classical guitar in college and music theory classes, so I kind of kept it as a side thing that was bubbling up, but as an aside thing.

PM: So you were always a reader of music and all that?

JEH: Yeah. Not a great reader, but it was a skill I had. And yeah, so the jump of MI--I considered going to Berklee in Boston, I guess, but MI was a quicker program and more live experience playing and less theory.

PM: Right.

JEH: So it seemed to be a clear choice, although Berklee would have been grand, too.

PM: No doubt. And you would have run into some interesting people in the years that you attended, no doubt.

JEH: Yeah.

PM: Was that also true at MI? Did you run into people there, either on staff or contemporaries, who influenced you as a person or a player?

JEH: Absolutely! I got to do a clinic with Joe Pass--

PM: Wow.

JEH: --as well as lesser known players on staff, but equally wonderful. A player named Joe Diorio, for example.

PM: Right.

JEH: And Robben Ford, who was on staff, too.

PM: Was he nice?

JEH: Yeah, he's very nice, at least in my experience. I got to do a few one-on-one lessons with him, and he was just, yeah, very nice.

PM: One-on-ones with Robben Ford, that's pretty cool. Especially at certain periods, he did some of my favorite guitar playing. There's an early album that he did with his brothers--

JEH: Really.

PM: --as the Charles Ford Band, that was just phenomenal guitar playing. Did you like being in L.A.--again, not much of a stretch from San Diego, but--

JEH: Yeah, I did like being in L.A., especially the musicians. There were people there from all over the world. It was just a great--for me it was a great place, maybe not because it was L.A., per se, but because what I was doing there was just so exciting. I lived two blocks from school, and I walked to and from on Hollywood Boulevard. So that was the strip I knew, Hollywood Boulevard.

PM: So were you more of a songwriter type at the time, or did you get in, seriously, to the jazz thing?

JEH: Well, I was a songwriter type. My focus, first and foremost, absolutely, was as a writer. The other things didn't come as easily. I fell absolutely in love with jazz guitar playing at the Musicians Institute. I loved the luscious harmonies and--yeah, it was the harmonies. And as a writer, I gravitated toward those harmonies. Then it was a matter of being able to manifest it. And I think it was Joe Diorio who said, "Learn everything inside out, and then forget it. That's when you can really play."

PM: Hmm.

JEH: But learning everything inside out, that's a tall order.

[laughter]

PM: Yeah, right, "everything" is a lot.

So after school was done, then you drifted to Europe. It's a wonderful progression of things, really.

JEH: Yeah.

PM: Where, in particular?

JEH: I spent most of the time in Florence.

PM: Ah.

JEH: My boyfriend at the time was a painter, and he was studying it at an atelier in Florence. And I went there and did music. And then also in Germany, I was in Germany and Paris.

PM: Wow. Having spent some time in Germany myself, I wonder where you were hanging out there?

JEH: In and around Kassel, in a region called Hessen.

PM: Certainly. But part of your European experience, at least by the bio, is "Painter's model by day and street bard at night."

[laughter]

PM: I mean, it sounds literally like someone from another time.

JEH: Wow. Well, in a way, being a model in Europe was just fabulous. You get sort of adopted by the studio that you're working in, and part of an artistic community. And it was quite fluid and integrative, the music and art and the discussion of them. In Europe, art and music felt like they were important standing all by themselves. In America, it always felt like the value of art or music was how much you got paid for it. If you were successful--the more successful you were, the more you got paid. In Europe you had a feeling that it didn't matter about getting paid, it was about enriching lives.

PM: Right. And I think it's still like that. I think that difference still exists in Europe today.

JEH: Yeah, absolutely.

PM: Which is kind of astonishing in this acquisitive, materialistic and technological age.

JEH: Yeah, I would agree, definitely.

PM: But it certainly is rarely to be found in American culture.

JEH: Exactly. And that's why it takes a brave artist--and there are thousands of brave--probably hundreds of thousands of brave artists in this country who are still living by that even though the culture isn't giving them much recognition for it.

PM: And in fact, it's giving them less and less.

JEH: Right.

PM: The artists who do get attention are the very corporate, what seem to many of us as more disposable types, since they come and go with great speed. And the people who are trying to do something lasting and important fall prey, not only to that kind of thinking, but also the rise of video, of gaming, of computers, and all these other things that are literally capturing the attention, for better or for worse, of the American public. The global public, really.

JEH: Absolutely. Something I tried to take back with me and keep, from Europe, was the importance of artist community, that it's very important to support each other's work. For

example, in Chicago I'm part of a group of artists, a painter and a photographer and a performance artist type cellist that meet regularly and keep the discussion going. And audiences are there. They're relatively small, but they still deserve the music to come out to. There's still a place for it. It's just not where the money is.

PM: Where do you like to gig in Chicago? Is there a place that you like to play?

JEH: Well, I have to say I'm not gigging in Chicago right now, that I've taken a hiatus. The places that I loved to play were Shuba's and Pops For Champagne.

PM: Yeah.

JEH: Those are nice places. And it would be a thrill to play at the Green Mill where I first saw Patricia Barber, it's just a wonderful venue.

PM: Yeah, I've heard that's an amazing venue.

JEH: But I've taken a hiatus for the past two and a half years. And now--well, I guess that leads to the album coming out.

PM: Yeah. I'm almost there. Actually, we should get there, because I'm so curious about all who you are, that I'll go on indefinitely, because I'm just one of those Joy Eden Harrison fans, you know. But before we hit the current work, let's touch on the first album of yours that blew my mind, *Unspoken*.

JEH: Ah.

PM: Was that cut in southern California or in Chicago?

JEH: That was cut in California.

PM: And with Cindy Lee Berryhill producing or co-producing?

JEH: She was producing.

PM: That was really an astonishing record [see our review], and went on to win you best jazz artist that year by the IMA.

JEH: Right, the Independent Music Awards.

PM: That's quite an honor.

JEH: Oh, my gosh! The biggest thrill of a lifetime. One of the judges was Tom Waits, who is a huge hero of mine. [see our review of the most recent Waits release] And [clarinetist] Don Byron, who was one of the arrangers for Robert Altman's *Kansas City*

[see our review of Byron's own 2004 CD], and Arturo Sandoval, the Cuban horn player. I don't think I've ever received a greater honor in my life.

PM: Now, was there a ceremony anywhere? Or did they send you something, or what--

JEH: Oh, they sent me an award. And it was on the website for the year. It wasn't the glorious *accoutrement* that came along with it, it was the honor of the people who examined the music.

PM: Of course. And aside from the honor and the prestige of the actual award, did anything else cool spin off that, say event-wise or connection-wise?

JEH: Well, no. And I can't believe the irony of the confluence of situations. At exactly the time when that award came out and things were happening, it was right then that I felt--I was so in debt from the album, and out of time, and so stressed out from music and all the demands of it financially and energetic-wise--because I'd started my own label--that I began looking for what else I needed to do to ground my life. So it was kind of ironic timing for this momentum to build, and then for the platform under me to sort of drop out. I needed to make some other decisions.

PM: Right, about how to make your life make sense fiscally.

JEH: Exactly. But I dreamed of writing them a letter, a personal letter saying, "Thank you. I really appreciate it." I think the world of those artists. But I never did that, and I really wish I had.

PM: Yeah. How did you meet Cindy Lee Berryhill who produced *Unspoken*?

JEH: Ah, Cindy Lee. She was another person on the San Diego scene. And we met just through friends and through the scene in San Diego. So we'd been talking just for years, and doing shows together. I loved her album *Garage Orchestra*, and I loved how she considered layering sound. And she had a strong Brian Wilson background, and love, and I thought it might be interesting to work with her. It was actually quite fabulous.

PM: Yeah. And she did a terrific job.

JEH: Yeah.

PM: Are you in contact with her anymore?

JEH: We talk semi-regularly. It's been tapering off a little bit, but she's still out in San Diego, and still--last I heard, she was working on a musical project.

PM: You've had a couple of great songs end up in major movies. How did that happen? Did they get pitched, or just heard and picked up?

JEH: I guess two ways. That was off my first album, *Angel Town*.

PM: Which I just bought on Ebay this morning.

JEH: Oh, wonderful. That was, let's see, another great story. Buddy Blue is also a great producer. But one of them, the record label I was on, Bizarre/Planet, which was Frank Zappa's label originally--

PM: And Beefheart, of whom I'm a huge fan.

JEH: [laughs] Great. Yeah, the label got it on *Suicide Kings*. I'm not sure how. I was just informed by the label that I had a song coming out in a movie. And then the other one, a friend of mine is a film producer, and she really liked the CD and played it for the director, and he decided to use two cuts in the film he was doing.

PM: What is that other song? I forget.

JEH: "The Love Beneath Your Lies." That went into *Curtain Call*.

PM: *Curtain Call*, right.

JEH: And then "Marlene" went into *Suicide Kings*.

PM: Wow. Very cool. Did either of those make you any dough?

JEH: Yes. That is the beauty, that the money in music is in the publishing.

PM: Yeah, absolutely.

JEH: It was the gift that kept on giving. BMI would send me checks quarterly, sometimes large, sometimes small, but it depended on if it was coming out on what channel--

PM: Yeah.

JEH: And when they got released in Europe, that was another nice little infusion.

PM: So yeah, thanks for indulging my interest in your fascinating story. But before we go into the very latest work, tell us, please, about getting married, and your day gig, and all that.

JEH: Well, my husband I met through starting my own label. I had a friend on the Beastie Boys' label who would come out from L.A. to sort of help me get started and organized. And she was always talking about this person that had an indie label distribution company that she would visit when she was in Chicago helping me. She worked with him for other things. And he and I first met business-wise. I just wanted to

introduce him to the album, and to see the kind of setup that he had, which was a big warehouse with a lot of different small labels inside it. So we had a meeting for business reasons, and then the rest is history. We just started talking and never stopped.

[We talked here off the record for a bit about her husband, and the cruel money trench called the music business, and it led to Joy's day gig, teaching school.]

JEH: I think people who are in it for money see artists as part of the slot machine, you know? You play it to win. You don't play it because you love it.

PM: Right.

JEH: So that's where teaching came in.

PM: Ah.

JEH: I thought, well, I'll take the time off to do art, which I can do now for the rest of my life in a balanced financial situation, which is the summers off. And it will also add some real anchoring to my life and grounding, some living and interacting in the real world, not spending time on tour, or booking shows, or all this other stuff. It'll ground me in the real world.

PM: There's something about the artistic life without some aspect of that that is so kind of megalomaniacal, so "all about me," that it really makes people delusional, I think.

JEH: Ah. You couldn't have said it better. Exactly that.

PM: And so how is being a teacher working out for you? And who is it that you're teaching, and what are you teaching to them?

JEH: Well, I teach fourth grade on the South Side of Chicago, so it's a little bit of a challenging environment, high poverty and crime, and gangs. But the children--

PM: Jeez!

JEH: --the children that I'm teaching are remarkable. And I tell you, teaching just--I guess you could say it keeps me fresh, because they're so awake, they're so present, they're so filled with wonder. And I have to be there for them.

PM: Hmm.

JEH: I have to feed them, and help create riverbanks to funnel their creativity.

PM: Wow.

JEH: My father asked me--and he's an artist--he asked me if I was going to use teaching as fuel for my work. And I said, "No. I think that for me, I want to give my students the tools to write the story of their own lives. So my concern is to instill in my students a love of words and an understanding of the power of words to change their minds, change their lives, change the world, or just to reflect their minds, reflect their hearts." And so our big project last year at the end of the year was for them all to publish a book, and then have a reading. And yeah, I love teaching, it really does keep me present.

PM: Although, looking back, I can remember a good teacher or two, it's hard to imagine what it would be like having a fourth grade teacher like you.

JEH: I feel equally lucky to have the students that I have. They're really extraordinary, and being with them gives me a lot.

PM: The latest work, *Blue Venus*, a swell record that I like very much, came to me as a personal advance, so I have no credits. Tell us, please, who produced, and who plays.

JEH: Well, I produced it with the engineer and the drummer that I've been working with. We all put in. But Mike Hagler was the engineer, and the drummer that I've worked with, that I've been working with for a long time, is Chuck Harling. The main horn player is Paul Von Mertens. And he actually just came off tour with Brian Wilson, so it was kind of nice to have that one little link present from the old album.

PM: Right.

JEH: And the trumpet player on "Calico Cat," that was actually my nephew Joe Harrison. And then keyboards, Mike Hagler played keyboards, and he also arranged the ambient sounds.

PM: Yeah. Let's talk about the ambient sounds, because that's quite a departure, and certainly a welcome addition. It really works beautifully in your music.

JEH: Well, the vision for the album was to have a rich, traditional acoustic core, with a luscious electronic textural backdrop. And before any notes went, before anything happened, I was thinking of sort of like a colorized black and white film. Technicolor, I think it's called, or that kind of richness, but with a simplicity at the core.

PM: Sounds fantastic. Do you know how he generated those sounds? I mean, I don't know too much about that.

JEH: Well, originally--I'll just talk about my favorite one. The white noise of a radio?

PM: Uh-huh.

JEH: And then amplified through a microphone, and into the system, and then manipulated with effects. And that became a backdrop that's perfect for "Bullet on a Wire."

PM: Wow.

JEH: So just taking sounds from the environment, just things like that, and putting them through electronic devices.

PM: Wow. How long a period was involved in the writing of that record?

JEH: Well, there is one song that's older than the last album, and that's "Popsicle Town." That was going to go onto *Unspoken*, but it never sounded right in the studio. The rest of it, I guess it's a two-year period of writing. And then, equally, a two-year period of development in the studio.

PM: It's a fantastic record.

JEH: Oh, thank you.

PM: Are you going to use anybody in the promotion of that record, or are you just going to have it and play behind it as your lifestyle and other obligations allow?

JEH: I guess both. I mean, I want to do the main concert with Mike Hagler playing electronic backdrop. And I will tour with Chuck Harling on drums. And I think we'll sort make a very small core out of the larger sound.

PM: Wow. That's ambitious. That's great.

JEH: Part of me can't wait to get back on stage again. And this break has been very rejuvenating.

PM: Because that's the other thing about you, is that although the music is great and the tunes are great, and the playing and the singing is great, really, there's a very unusual and captivating presence that you're able to produce on stage that really needs to be seen.

JEH: Oh, you're very kind.

PM: I'm not really that kind. Ask around.

[laughter]

JEH: I love being on stage. To me, that's everything. That is the moment when the music and all the writing--maybe that's what Joe Diorio was saying for me, as an artist as a whole, that's the place where you forget everything and life lives through you.

PM: Mmm.

JEH: Because you have to be present in the moment on stage. And to me, sound is also very visual. It sort of goes with movement, and the way you cut through space. In the same way that sound cuts through space, bodies cut through space, instruments cut through space. I just see that aspect of the art growing over the course of my life. I see that aspect integrating with all the senses, all the senses, but in the moment where you can forget everything.

PM: I remember one time seeing you in a hotel room at a Folk Alliance. And there was a group of people in the room getting ready to see you play your songs. And you turned your back to the audience in a very dramatic way, and when you turned to them again, it felt like, "Wow, someone new had arrived."

[laughter]

PM: And I remember thinking, "Oh, my. Look at that." It was amazing. It was just pure presence, is what it was, which is something that's so--when presence shows up, it's mind blowing.

JEH: Wow. I think that was also a pretty calm show, so I'm glad that it all came through. I think, too, that artists on screen--I mean, when you're on stage, you become a screen, and everybody in the audience, it feels like--I don't know how to say this right--they need you to be there for them, because they need to put themselves--it's sort of like the reader and a book can't be separated. And the reader brings everything of who they are to what they're reading. And I feel that way on the stage as an artist. I need to be pure to the art, and yet wide open to be a screen for everybody to put on me what they need as a viewer. Does that make sense? Maybe not.

PM: It makes the kind of sense I'm looking for, I'll tell you that.

[laughter]

PM: I can only speak for myself. Do you consider yourself to be a spiritual person?

JEH: Oh, that's tricky territory. Yeah, I suppose I do. Definitely not a religious person, but a spiritual person.

PM: Yeah.

JEH: I feel--I guess every religion has something in it at its core that's quite profound.

PM: Yeah, if it can be found.

[laughter]

PM: Are you oriented in any particular way or ways, spiritually?

JEH: I wouldn't say that. I feel pretty wide open. I'm oriented toward, if I would say that, the mystical aspect of all religions.

PM: Do you read much in your life?

JEH: Intermittently, I read--I mean, actually, I read quite a bit. But lately a lot of my reading has been in service of teaching. So there has been a lot of non-fiction about the practice of teaching.

PM: That very interesting.

JEH: But as far as writers, I love Toni Morrison's books. And right now I just picked up *The God of Small Things*. I've just read the first two pages. But I think as soon as I have another break I want to finish that book.

PM: Are you listening to anything fun lately?

JEH: Listening to anything fun lately... Not as much as I would like to be, I'll say that. I'm always and forever listening to Chet Baker.

PM: Ah.

JEH: So he's kind of a soundtrack to my life, always and ever.

PM: Interesting. Like my friend Kami Lyle, she's always listening to Chet Baker, or so I have gathered.

JEH: Ah.

PM: And she's another great jazzy singer/songwriter.

JEH: Wow. He's so beautiful because his statements are simple, yet very, very deep.

PM: Mmm. And what are your plans, your aspirations? What would you like to see happen?

JEH: Happen with this album, or happen in the next ten years or--

PM: Whatever you'd like to say about any of that.

JEH: Oh, I suppose I would like to find--which is just starting to happen as teaching is becoming more comfortable after a few years--a balanced life. A life where I put out an album every maybe three years, and tour during the summer, and not take the money part of music seriously at all, but to ride just straight into the creation and the performing.

PM: That's a very interesting paradigm. And I think we may see more people adopting that view of music and creativity. I think that's a fascinating approach. And I wish you the best of luck with it.

JEH: Well, thank you.