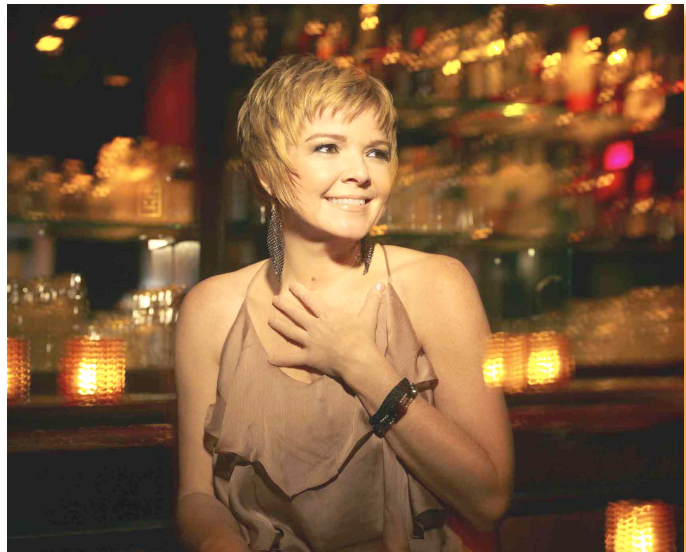


**Elegant, Dreamy, Understated CD by Grammy-Nominated Vocalist Karrin Allyson Features Melancholy Takes on Jazz/Broadway/Pop Songs by Ellington, Sondheim, Monk, Bill Evans, Paul Simon, Anthony Newley, Johnny Mandel, and More**

**Concord Jazz Sets *'Round Midnight* for May 3rd**

On her new album, ***'Round Midnight***, Grammy-nominated vocalist and pianist **Karrin Allyson** weaves an elegant, understated dreamscape featuring 11 songs by some of the most storied writers in jazz, Broadway and pop music, from **Duke Ellington** to **Stephen Sondheim** to **Paul Simon** and more. The May 3<sup>rd</sup> release, the singer's thirteenth on the respected **Concord Jazz** label, marks the first time that Allyson plays all the keyboard parts — piano and Rhodes. The subtle production lets Allyson's voice shine, as she delivers melancholy, mature takes on such classics as 'Send In The Clowns,' **Charlie Chaplin's** 'Smile', **Johnny Mandel's** 'The Shadow of Your Smile,' Ellington's 'Sophisticated Lady,' and more. Allyson will tour this Spring in support of the album, and an itinerary follows, below.



Over the course of her storied career, Allyson has earned coverage from some of the most respected critics in America. In a **NY TIMES** concert review, Stephen Holden observed: ***"Ms. Allyson is really a jazz equivalent of Bonnie Raitt. She approaches a romantic song from a perspective that is wised up and well defended but not quite tough. I couldn't imagine her falling for a line of sweet talk."*** In a separate live review, Holden noted, ***"She doesn't preen, flirt or act coy. What you see***

*and hear is what you get: a musically and psychologically centered gamine, deeply schooled in jazz...and devoid of grandiosity.”* The NY TIMES’ Ben Ratliff has described Allyson’s voice as *“expressive, a little scratchy, brassy and generous, more committed to swing.”* Veteran jazz critic Don Heckman wrote in The LA TIMES, *“Allyson has another attribute that has consistently placed her in the top level of jazz vocal artists: utter musical fearlessness.”* In The Washington Post, Mike Joyce praised 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.”*

Concord Jazz introduces the album as follows:



*The set opens with Bill Evans’s “Turn Out the Stars,” a song whose poignant lyrics by Gene Lees are made even more heartbreaking by Allyson’s decision to slow down the tempo and stretch the time at certain points along the way. The followup track is a quiet reading of Paul Simon’s “April Come She Will” that examines the human heart through the prism of changing seasons.*

*Further in, Allyson delivers a wistful rendition of “Spring Can Really Hang You Up the Most,” the bittersweet standard by Fran Landesman and Tommy Wolf, based on the classic T.S. Eliot line: “April is the cruelest month...” “I’ve sung this song for years and always wrestled with its long form and many lyrics,” says Allyson. “I wanted to make it swing, yet still have it convey the sadness of the story that’s told in the lyrics.” Allyson closes with the title track, Monk’s iconic composition that puts the final touch on the jazz club vibe that has taken shape amid the preceding ten tracks.*

*In ‘Round Midnight, Allyson is joined by her long time partner, guitarist Rod Fleeman, with Bob Sheppard on woodwinds, harmonicist Randy Weinstein, bassist Ed Howard, whose previous associations include balladeer Shirley Horn, and drummer Matt Wilson.*

#### **‘Round Midnight Track Listing:**

1. Turn Out the Stars (Bill Evans-Gene Less)
2. April Come She Will (Paul Simon)
3. Goodbye (Gordon Jenkins)
4. I’m Always Chasing Rainbows (Harry Carroll-Joseph McCarthy)
5. Spring Can Really Hang You Up the Most (Fran Landesman-Tommy Wolf)
6. Smile (Charlie Chaplin)
7. Sophisticated Lady (Duke Ellington-Irving Mills-Mitchell Parish)
8. There’s No Such Thing As Love (Ian Fraser-Anthony Newley)
9. The Shadow of Your Smile (Johnny Mandel-Paul Francis Webster)
10. Send In the Clowns (Stephen Sondheim)
11. ‘Round Midnight (Thelonious Monk-Cootie Williams-Bernard Hanighen)

The album was recorded at Sear Sound in NYC, and was produced by Karrin Allyson and Nick Phillips. For more information, visit the Online Media Kit for '**Round Midnight**': <http://mediakits.concordmusicgroup.com/32662/>

**Karrin Allyson 2011 Tour Dates:**

3/26/2011	Jazz Arts Music Society Education Fundraiser – Falls Country Club Palm Beach, FL	
4/26/2011	Cabaret at Theater Square	Pittsburgh, PA
5/5/2011	TBA	Toronto, Canada
5/7/2011	Folly Theater	Kansas City, MO
5/8/2011	Mayne Stage Theater	Chicago, IL
5/20-21/2011	Sculler's Jazz Club	Boston, MA
5/22/2011	Iron Horse Music Hall	Northampton, MA
5/27-28/2011	Spoletto Festival USA	Charleston, SC
5/31-6/4/2011	Birdland	New York, NY
7/9/2011	Omaha Jazz Fest	Omaha, NE

Visit <http://www.karrin.com/tourdates.html> for updated tour schedule.

**'Round Midnight Liner Notes, by Karrin Allyson:**

Imagine yourself, in the city, walking, late at night. It's "'Round Midnight." The wind is cold but you hear some warm sounds and you follow your ear down into a small, dark club. There's a woman at the piano, singing these intimate ballads—one after the other. Maybe you've just recently suffered a heartache, or maybe the lyrics, melodies, and harmonies evoke feelings you have somewhere down deep inside.

Each one of these songs holds great meaning for me—as I hope they do or will for you. Here are a few of their stories:

Turn Out the Stars—Bill Evans's many (especially live) versions of his great tune are usually played quite up-tempo, almost boisterously. I've always loved the tune, but was unaware of the lyrics Gene Lees wrote—wonderfully sad, beautiful poetry. You cannot have written that lyric without ever having felt the desperation of a broken heart. My Mom and Bill McGlaughlin asked me to learn this song—so, when playing around with it, I discovered that it felt good as a slower, very poignant type of "waltz" with lots of stretched out time where we needed it to be. Bob Sheppard plays every woodwind instrument on this album so beautifully. His tenor saxophone solo here was the perfect, soulful addition.

April Come She Will has been a favorite Paul Simon song of mine forever. Whenever nature is referenced with life and love, I feel even more connected with it all. Rod Fleeman plays a beautiful guitar solo.

Goodbye—My friend and producer Nick Phillips suggested this tune. Gordon Jenkins was the composer and I remember loving Linda Ronstadt's version of this with Nelson Riddle. One of the most moving, live versions I've heard was when Rod and bassist Bob Bowman played this for Bill and me when we were leaving Kansas City to come to New York (11 years ago!). I really wanted "Shep" to play bass clarinet in here somewhere, so he did. I think it added a beautiful, dark color to the rhumba groove we had—and thank you Ed Howard for slipping references to "Poinciana" in there. "Goodbye" was also Benny Goodman's "sign off" tune!

I'm Always Chasing Rainbows—This is a song I used to sing frequently as a fledgling artist on solo gigs, in a very cabaret-like way with the verse which didn't seem to fit on this project. My own historian Bill tells me that this melody is almost 200 years old—from Frédéric Chopin's "Fantaisie Impromptu, Opus 66, in C# minor" composed in 1834. Harry Carroll and Joseph McCarthy wrote the music and lyrics for "I'm Always Chasing Rainbows" for the Broadway show *Oh, Look!* which opened in March of 1918. Interestingly, other singers who have performed the song run the gamut: Bing Crosby, Judy Garland, and Alice Cooper! Shep's soprano saxophone solo is transcendent.

Spring Can Really Hang You Up the Most—The bittersweet, great standard by Fran Landesman and Tommy Wolf. They were quite the fabulous, Bohemian couple, and she is still out there, writing. She says the lyric was based on T.S. Eliot's line—"April is the cruelest month..." I've sung this song for years and always wrestled with its long form and many lyrics. I wanted to make it swing yet still have it convey the sadness of the story that's told in the lyrics. I can remember where I was walking in "The Park" (Central Park of course!) thinking up this arrangement—"killing the lonely hours."

Smile, written by Charlie Chaplin, was a request from my sister Tracy. We've played it many ways over the years, but when considering recording it, I finally came up with this arrangement, with the intro and outro kind of harkening back to my classical piano days. (Thank you Elisa, for letting me practice this at your house!) I think I'm trying to talk myself into smiling when I certainly don't feel like it—but maybe not buying that it really works. Randy Weinstein, who plays harmonica on this track, is a dear old friend from Kansas City who moved to NYC before I did. He's also featured on a few of our other CDs and always adds a lovely quality and mood to whatever he plays on.

Sophisticated Lady—Duke Ellington's wonderful tune. I love Carmen McRae and Betty Carter's duet version of this song. I never really thought of singing it myself until I started working with Steve Nelson, who would play it as an instrumental on our gigs. He encouraged me to join him for just the last vocal verse—sort of like the big band singers used to do. Since then, I've loved singing it.

There's No Such Thing As Love—Anthony Newley's heartbreaker. I learned it from a live recording by Carmen McRae—my hero.

The Shadow of Your Smile—The well known and well loved Johnny Mandel song from the dark film *The Sand Piper* (with Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton). Johnny and I have become friends and have often talked about doing a project together. (This is at least a start Johnny!) I have sung this tune several times at award ceremonies at the Library of Congress and the Songwriter's Hall of Fame for Mr. Mandel. Shep adds a beautiful, fluid alto flute solo.

Send In the Clowns—Stephen Sondheim's song from *A Little Night Music* has always been a favorite of my Dad's. This is another song that was a regular in my solo gig repertoire way back when. Not that it's such a long time ago in "years" of course, but it feels like a "musical lifetime" ago for me! And of course there's the definitive live Sarah Vaughan version which I love. Rod's lovely arrangement, with its subtle harmonic surprises and laid back groove give it a new perspective. Life is interesting. We can make as many "intentional" decisions as we want, but it's always full of surprises—good and bad.

'Round Midnight—Thelonious Monk's iconic, classic composition, was a standard in my repertoire when I started singing jazz. It's interesting how and when songs/standards drift in and out of style in certain parts of the country. For me, it's been quite awhile since I've heard it sung out and about, but it used to be all the time. Rod suggested recording it as bass and voice duet and Ed Howard has been working with us for several years now and always adds a solid, soulful touch. The lyrics were written by an Omahan (one of my home towns), Bernie Hanighen (born in 1908) who also wrote lyrics to "When a Man Loves a Woman."

### **Karrin Allyson Biography, via Concord Jazz:**

Karrin Allyson digs the late-night groove, even when it's a little heartbreaking. After a dozen releases on Concord Jazz over the course of two decades – and three GRAMMY® nominations for best Best Jazz Vocal Album along the way – the versatile vocalist/pianist still believes that the emotional connection that takes place in a small, quiet club during the late hours is one of the best parts of the jazz experience.

She says it eloquently in the liner notes to her new CD, *'Round Midnight*, her thirteenth Concord recording set for release on May 3, 2011: "Imagine yourself, in the city, walking late at night," she writes. "It's *'Round Midnight*. The wind is cold, but you hear some warm sounds and you follow your ear down into a small, dark club. There's a woman at the piano singing these intimate

ballads – one after the other. Maybe you’ve just recently suffered a heartache, or maybe the lyrics, melodies and harmonies evoke feelings you have somewhere deep down inside.”

That woman at the piano is Allyson – more so on this recording than any other in her discography – and creating that intimate connection was her prime directive throughout the project. “Every piano or keyboard part that you hear on this album is played by me,” she says. “I’ve played two or three tunes on previous recordings, but this is the first time in thirteen records that I’ve played them all. I’ve been doing that more and more in my live shows for the last three years, so it just seemed like the natural thing to do on this record.”

The eleven tracks on ***'Round Midnight*** come from a wide variety of sources, including Bill Evans, Paul Simon, Duke Ellington, Johnny Mandel, Thelonious Monk, Stephen Sondheim, even Charlie Chaplin. But regardless of who wrote the songs and when, Allyson ties them all together with the same melancholy thread with which they were originally spun. Her combination of rich yet understated vocals and subtle piano lines tell a timeless story that’s best understood in what another great singer used to call “the wee small hours of the morning.”

“They’re heartbreak songs,” says Allyson, “and one cathartic way to get over a heartbreak is to sing about it, or listen to someone else sing about it. Embracing the difficult emotions is part of the healing process.”

She’s able to tug at the heartstrings with the help of some talented players. Guitarist Rod Fleeman has been part of her crew – in the studio and onstage – for a span of more than 20 years and at least a few continents. L.A.-based saxophonist/flutist/clarinetist Bob Sheppard has been a recurring figure in Allyson’s West Coast dates. Harmonicist Randy Weinstein has been an occasional collaborator on past projects, all the way back to Allyson’s early days in Kansas City. Bassist Ed Howard, a top-notch New York-based player whose previous associations include Shirley Horn and Roy Haynes, has been a part of Allyson’s live show for five years, but ***'Round Midnight*** marks his debut appearance on one of her recordings.

Drummer Matt Wilson is the newcomer, but one whom Allyson has known for several years. “I’ve always really admired his playing,” she says, “I wanted to create a lot of space in these songs, and I knew he was capable of doing that.”

***'Round Midnight*** is latest example of Allyson’s life-long attraction to great songs by enduring songwriters. Born in Great Bend, Kansas, and raised in Omaha, Nebraska (save for a brief period in the San Francisco Bay area during her high school years), she started playing piano at five. Her mother was a classical pianist, while her father’s tastes ran more toward folk music. The singer-songwriters of the 1970s – Joni Mitchell, Carole King, James Taylor and the like – were among her first inspirations to become a singer.

During high school and college, her musical aspirations were all over the map – all-girl rock bands, funk bands, five-hour bar gigs playing solo piano, whatever felt comfortable and helped pay the bills. Her taste for jazz developed during her college years at University of Nebraska in Omaha, where she sang in a big band and shifted her focus away from the piano and more toward the microphone.

After college, she became a regular at a Kansas City nightclub before signing to Concord for the 1992 release of her debut album, *I Didn’t Know About You* – an album that landed her a spot in *Playboy’s* Annual Reader’s Poll alongside jazz giants like Ella Fitzgerald and Shirley Horn. The albums kept coming at a steady pace throughout the remainder of the decade and into the next. *Ballads: Remembering John Coltrane*, released in 2001, earned two Grammy nominations, while *Footprints* (2006) and *Imagina: Songs of Brasil* (2008) both scored GRAMMY® nominations for Best Jazz Vocal Album.

Allyson has maintained a busy schedule outside the studio as well. In addition to her frequent club dates (she spends two days out of three on tour), she has performed at some of the top concert halls throughout the U.S., including Carnegie Hall for an all-star tribute to Ella Fitzgerald, and gigs with the Kansas City Symphony and the Omaha Symphony.

She left Kansas City in 2000 to make New York City her new home. It's just the kind of town where you're likely to wander into one of those small, late-night jazz clubs and hear someone just like her play and sing the kinds of songs that make *'Round Midnight* the heartbreaking yet fulfilling experience that it is.

The set opens with Bill Evans's "Turn Out the Stars," a song whose poignant lyrics by Gene Lees are made even more introspective by Allyson's decision to slow down the tempo and stretch the time at certain points along the way. "Bob Sheppard plays every woodwind instrument on this album so beautifully," she says. "His tenor saxophone solo here was the perfect, soulful addition."

The followup track is a quiet reading of Paul Simon's "April Come She Will" that examines the human heart through the prism of changing seasons. "Whenever nature is referenced with life and love, I feel even more connected with it all," says Allyson. "Rod Fleeman plays a beautiful guitar solo."

Further in, Allyson delivers a wistful rendition of "Spring Can Really Hang You Up the Most," the bittersweet standard by Fran Landesman and Tommy Wolf, based on the classic T.S. Eliot line: "April is the cruelest month..." "I've sung this song for years and always wrestled with its long form and many lyrics," says Allyson. "I wanted to make it swing, yet still have it convey the sadness of the story that's told in the lyrics."

Her version of Charlie Chaplin's "Smile" includes an intro and outro that harken back to her classical piano days. Her take on the song is consistent with Chaplin's original lyrics. "I think I'm trying to talk myself into smiling when I certainly don't feel like it, but maybe not buying that it really works," she says. Randy Weinstein, who plays harmonica here, "always adds a lovely quality and mood to whatever he plays on."

It doesn't get much more poignant - indeed, almost tragic - than "Send in the Clowns," Stephen Sondheim's classic from *A Little Night Music*. "Rod's lovely arrangement, with its subtle harmonic surprises and laid back groove, give it a new perspective," says Allyson. "Life is interesting. We can make as many intentional decisions as we want, but it's always full of surprises - good and bad."

Allyson closes with the title track, Monk's iconic composition that puts the final touch on the jazz club vibe that has taken shape amid the preceding ten tracks. She's especially fond of the minimal but effective arrangement. "Rod suggested recording it as a bass and voice duet," she says. "Ed Howard has been working with us for several years now and always adds a solid, soulful touch."

In the end, no matter what the arrangement or the voicing, it's all about telling the story - even if the story is about heartbreak. Sometimes the best way to do it is to draw people into a quiet space in the late hours *'Round Midnight* - a time and place where their guard is down and they're open to music that speaks the language of the heart.

"What I'm most interested in doing on this record - and on all my records - is reaching people and communicating with them," says Allyson. "That's the thing that inspires me more than anything else."

For more information about Karrin Allyson, to set up an interview, or to receive a review copy of the new CD, please contact [SethCohenPR@earthlink.net](mailto:SethCohenPR@earthlink.net) or 212-873-1011.

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