



**Helen Glover**  
**Alto**

My musical experience prior to joining Bytown Voices has covered a good part of the world's surface - from family music-making in New Zealand as a youngster; to jazz singing in Ottawa as a solo performer and in a jazz choir; to conducting opera and art tours to world cultural centres and teaching music to young children in between. I grew up with older siblings who sang and played the piano, so my childhood was filled with the music of the day. I realize now, just how important it was that I was able to join in the music making, whether dancing around the living room or naturally finding the low harmony to my sister's soprano and my brother's light baritone. With no television, we made our own fun and worked our way through an impressive pile of music every night. This early music experience is how you learn to make music rather than just listening to it. Simple, isn't it? So, if you have the opportunity to introduce a child to music making, please share your gift with passion and enthusiasm.

I was born into a musical family in Motueka, a small agricultural town in a sheltered coastal region of New Zealand, blessed with the highest sunshine hours in the country. Known for its sheep, hops, kiwifruit, apples, pears and all manner of agricultural produce, it is also renowned for excellent wines.

My brother played slide trombone in his high school band, and semi-classical works as well as popular songs on the piano, and due to this exposure, I developed a wide appreciation for many musical styles. I now have a large repertoire of the music of the golden age of the North American Songbook, the popular and jazz music from the 1920's to the 60's.

I studied piano and voice and have sung in many musical genres, including my high school choir; the New Zealand folk music trio *The Everglades*; Ottawa's *Orpheus Musical Theatre* and choral group; *Rare Vintage* dinner theatre, and swing and popular music with small groups and big bands. I studied vocal jazz for 15 years at the Ottawa-based *Jazzworks Summer Jazz Camp* and attended workshops with Sheila Jordan, Barry Harris, Giacomo Gates, Julie Michels and Christine Duncan. I've sung at clubs, pubs, restaurants, galas and private events.

The *Helen Glover Quartet* performed favourite jazz standards at the *Ottawa International Jazz Festival* in 2006 and 2007, followed by a major project with a larger group, entitled *A Musical Tribute to Fats Waller*, which was presented at the Jazz Festival in 2008 and 2009. It was great fun singing those saucy songs!

I was a founding member of *Capital Vox Jazz Choir*, under Musical Director, Elise Letourneau, who wrote "A Canadian Folk Song" (*Marjory, Marjory Make the Tea*), which Bytown Voices had fun singing in 2017. It was very exciting and challenging to be singing 4, 5 and 6 part harmony in jazz rhythms! *Capital Vox* performed at the Ottawa Jazz Festival in 2010.

A uniquely satisfying aspect of my musical journey was teaching *Music Together* to very young children, using voice, rhythm instruments and lots of lively movement. I enjoyed laying down the building blocks of music for young ears and providing the opportunity for parents and children to have fun exploring music together. Think back to your early childhood. Was there a special person who sang to you, or who played an instrument? Were you inspired by this person and experience? It's very important for a child to have the experience of *making music*, not just listening to it coming from a CD or TV. (Jackie Houston, BV soprano, brought her two grandsons to my classes and they still remember those early songs.) However, once my six grandchildren began to arrive, my time was mostly occupied helping to look after them. They all enjoyed my classes and my eldest granddaughter is now a competitive dancer, while her two

younger sisters, play piano and recorder. Their most important influence is now their father, who plays guitar and arranges and records popular music. Another granddaughter sings and dances in her own little world, while one grandson dances and the other may start beginner classes this year. Their mother owns the dance school and teaches as well.

Although I trained as an elementary school teacher in New Zealand, my major career was as tour director with groups of music lovers from Canada and the USA. We travelled all over the world to attend opera and visit art galleries, as well as soaking up the local history and culture. I will always remember the moment in Berlin, six months after the wall came down, when I actually stepped through a large gaping hole from the West to the East. Getting lost in Venice and stumbling upon a mask making shop was memorable, as was wandering around Vienna in my spare time, poking into every possible doorway. And then there was Carlo, a truly patriotic music maker at his white baby grand, in a piano bar behind the famous *La Scala* opera house, in the Brera District, Milan's Artists' Quarter. I knew him well over many years and when I walked in late at night after the opera, he would start playing the Triumphant March from Verdi's *Aida*! Hours could slip by there and it was hard to leave. It was a remarkable period in my life.

My interest in opera led me to the *National Capital Opera Society*, which helps to support young artists, particularly with the *Brian Law Opera Scholarship*. From there, I was part of the group that formed the *Guild for Opera Lyra*, which for many years provided outreach, education, hospitality and fundraising for *Opera Lyra*, until its recent demise. It was very satisfying, being able to meet and support these artists.

I'm often asked how I prepare a song for jazz performance, so in a nutshell, I start with a melody I love, then go to the original sheet music, in order to honour the composer's intentions. After that, I listen to as many different versions of the song that I can find, both instrumental and vocal and sing it over and over until I feel like I've made it my own. Once I'm very familiar with the melody, I start exploring the harmony, in order to improvise on it. Improvising can be a restating of the words using slightly different notes or rhythms, or a simple or fairly complex embellishment of the vocal line using an improvised 'scatting' vocabulary (think Ella Fitzgerald). In performance, I sing the melody and then may improvise on it, followed by solos played by the other musicians, often piano and trumpet or bass. I close by singing the melody again, with a distinctive ending.

I live in the Glebe with my partner John Haysom (trumpet, fluegelhorn and valve trombone with the *Glebop Jazz Trio* and *Standing Room Only Big Band*) and our very intelligent border collie, Ben. We enjoy walks all year round through our neighbourhood parks and along the Rideau Canal to Lansdowne Park. Even though I have lived 50 years in beautiful Ottawa and travelled to many intriguing places, deep in my heart is an abiding love for my homeland, its peoples, the ocean and golden sand beaches of my childhood and its unique flora and fauna. To this day I miss the native trees and the distinctive song of the birds!

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