

MJ Territo Bio

“Territo does not sound like any other female jazz singer. Her phrasing and style reminds me more of male singers, like Frank Sinatra and Tony Bennett than Holiday or Ella. Territo has kind of the same coolness on her phrasing.” Wilfred Sostre, *Jazz Times*

From deep roots in writing and theatre, MJ sings with the words out front, choosing her two-hundred (and counting) song repertoire from the Great American Songbook; instrumental jazz compositions; rock; folk; pop; and world music. Beyond the lyrics, the songs she is drawn to have memorable melodies and tell some nugget of truth about life.

As a lyricist, MJ collaborates frequently with composers, and also pens words for instrumental jazz standards. When writing her own songs, it's the words that almost always come first. Even in her improvisations, with or without incorporating words, she focuses on telling a story.

In 2010 MJ independently released her first CD, *Down With Love*. The inspiration for it came one day while she was thumbing through some songbooks looking for fresh material. “Why are all the songs about love? There really is more to life!” she wondered. A little searching revealed that, of course, not *all* the songs are about romantic love. In short order, she came up with Jobim's *Waters of March*, about the unstoppable rush of spring and life. And Dylan's *Gotta Serve Somebody*, which reminds us that no matter who we are, we all answer to someone. Besides these two great tunes, MJ found and arranged eight other “unlove” songs for her debut CD.

“The album is certainly a lively affair, with Ms Territo singing with much gusto and no small amount of verve... So, we have songs that contemplate life, songs that are fun and those about celebrating life in all its variety.” John M. Peters, *The Borderland (UK)*

MJ performs regularly in clubs and other venues throughout the tri-state area. She particularly enjoys organizing her sets around a theme, such as “Strictly For the Birds” or “Heavens Above”, songs about the moon, stars,

and planets. She also loves to feature composers and/or lyricists and has dedicated sets to Alec Wilder, Johnny Mercer, Fran Landesman, Peggy Lee, and Dave Frishberg. There's also a whole evening devoted to the work of women jazz composers and lyricists, classic and contemporary.

Teaching is another of MJ's great joys. She is a Teaching Artist for ArtsWestchester, the arts council of Westchester County, NY, and enjoys presenting jazz workshops for children and adults. MJ works with private jazz singing students and is also an early childhood music expert and advocate. She currently teaches children in a Head Start program in White Plains, and has presented workshops on the benefits of music in early childhood throughout the US.

A former writer with more than 20 works of fiction and non-fiction to her credit, MJ continues to hit the keyboard for the occasional writing project.

Beyond the music world, MJ spends a lot of time on her yoga mat, which she credits with helping her maintain physical, mental, and spiritual fitness and flexibility. She is a committed community activist in her Yonkers NY neighborhood. Her African travels have led her to support several organizations doing excellent and necessary work there. (Click on [Beyond The Music.](#))