



Marian McPartland, died of natural causes at her home in Long Island, N.Y. at the age of 95.

For more than 40 years, she hosted Marian McPartland's Piano Jazz, an NPR program where she interviewed and accompanied many of the greatest artists of jazz. In 1984, it received the Peabody Award for excellence in broadcasting. In 1986 it won both the Gabriel Award and the NY Gold Medal Awards.

Marian McPartland was also a highly recognized jazz pianist. She told Terry Gross, Fresh Air, NPR in 2005 that her interest in music started when she was a young girl.

"From that moment on, I don't remember ever not playing piano, day and night, wherever I was," she said. "At my aunt's house, at kindergarten – wherever they had a piano, I played it.

McPartland studied classical music, played piano in vaudeville theaters across England. During WWII, she entertained troops, often jamming with American soldiers.

She married cornetist Jimmy McPartland and after the war, the couple made their way to the U.S. – first to Chicago, then to New York.

In New York she and pianist Mary Lou Williams became fast friends and comrades in the male dominated art world. McPartland struggled to make a name for herself in New York with one critic - a fellow musician - once remarked, she had three things going against her: She was British, she was white and she was a woman.

Possibly the most underrated of Marian McPartland's attributes was her talent as a composer. "Her piano pieces have entered the jazz repertoire, while some of her songs – with lyrics by such stars as Johnny Mercer, Sammy Cahn and Peggy Lee – have become part of The Great American Songbook"

There were many musicians who were women, yet, it was unusual for them to be recognized for something other than singing. "Someone would say, 'Oh, you play good for a girl,' or 'You sound just like a man.' At the time, I just took all those things as encouragement."

McPartland recorded and performed throughout the 1950s and into the '60s. While rock 'n' roll dominated the airwaves, Marian lectured on college campuses. She began work as a dj for a jazz station in New York and occasionally other artists would drop by. In 1979 South Carolina ETV radio launched Piano Jazz. Billy Taylor, also a pianist and NPR's jazz host was her first guest.