

# PRESS KIT

## Biography

Jill Benson is a long-time vocal, flute and piano professional. She teaches private piano, flute and voice lessons at Musicology in Burlington, Wisconsin. Jill also performs with several regional acts throughout the Midwest.

Jill's lifelong musical journey began in grade school where she played both flute and piano. By high school, Jill was competing in numerous solo and ensemble contests, including Wisconsin's State Solo Ensemble, where she received star firsts in both voice and flute solos all 4 years of high school. She performed in several musicals and received the prestigious John Philip Sousa band Award. Studied flute privately for 3 years with Karen Gifford, UCLA graduate and doctorate degree recipient from UW Madison.

Jill attended the University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point as a double music major (vocal and instrumental music education) after receiving a vocal scholarship awarded through auditions. She had the opportunity to study voice with Gretchen D'Armond and flute under Paul Doebler, both graduates of Julliard.

Jill has performed in bands for over 30 years, and is very active in the Burlington, WI music scene, where she gigs with the local band Time and Gravity, is a member of the band Mad Bark and is working with The Conviction Band. She contributes her talents in flute, keyboards and vocals.

Jill writes and performs original music, most recently releasing "Dreamscapes" in November of 2021.

Photos





## Press

Dodgeville Chronicle, October 28, 2021

# Mineral Point native releases instrumental piano album November 19

**By Kasi Greenwood**

"Music has always saved me. It's always pulled me out of the darkest of times, and it still does." These words were spoken by Mineral Point native Jill Benson, who is releasing an instrumental piano collection album this November.

Benson, daughter of Thomas and Carol Mielke, is a 1987 graduate of Mineral Point High School. She today lives in the Burlington area along with her husband Roy. She has three adult children: Bobby, Jess and Nicole and a four year old granddaughter.

Benson's love for music began when she was a young girl.

"I had Bill Brown for my middle school years in music," Benson said. "I also had wonderful band and choir directors through Jeanne Raemisch and Brian Carr, and they were absolutely awesome."

Benson went on to pursue music in college at UW-Stevens Point. The first two years, she doubled in music education. After the first two years, she was advised to drop education, as the education programs were failing.

"So I ended up getting out and going into performance, and I've been pretty much performing ever since," Benson said.

When not writing music, Benson has been playing in classic rock and 70's soft rock bands for over 30 years. When not performing, she is teaching private flute, voice and piano lessons at Musicology, a private music store in Burlington, WI.

"I've been at this music store for two years, and it doesn't even feel like a job to me," Benson said.

With COVID-19 shutting down in person rehearsals and performances, Benson spent a lot of time playing music on her piano, which turned into "Dreamscapes."

"Dreamscapes" is a 13 track instrumental piano music album, which Benson explains were inspired by her time growing up in Mineral Point.

"One of the songs is about letting my childhood home go," Benson said. "That was very difficult for me, and that song reflects that. Another song is 'Hometown Memories' reminding me of Mineral Point, because my heart is very much still there."

Benson also involved family with her album creation, as her brother Jack orchestrated two of her album songs.

"It was great to have him along on the album," Benson said.

Benson's father Thomas Mielke was a long time principal and teacher for Mineral Point Unified School District. He passed away in 2018. Benson's mother Carol, passed away the following year.

"I wish my parents were still here to see it all," Benson said. "They were a huge supporter of Jack and I. They encouraged us to follow our dreams of music, and because of them we are doing that."

The songs came from life experiences, and the feelings that were pent up during COVID-19.

"From losing my parents, and my memories of Mineral Point, everything came out in the music I wrote," Benson said. "That was kind of my therapy. I sat down and dealt with the state of the world, and wrote music."

Turning to herself during this time, she bought a piano from money earned from her parents. That piano is where she wrote all of her songs.

"That piano speaks to me, and in some ways I think it's my parents speaking to me," Benson said. "I think they had something to do with it because a lot of the music I wrote didn't feel like me playing or writing



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## [Dancing About Architecture by Dave Franklin](#), 07-10-2022

Dreamscapes – Jill Benson (reviewed by Dave Franklin)

By Dave Franklin - July 10, 2022

Jill Benson has certainly tried her hand at all manner of music-making, from rock covers to more sedate forms, she has taught both voice and instruments, she has played the flute on hip-hop tracks and has generally been forging a unique and varied musical career for thirty years. But there are always new ways to express yourself musically and always new challenges on the horizon.

With this in mind, she has returned to more understated and ambient pastures for her latest album, *Dreamscapes*, a piano-led album of instrumentals that wanders between the sparse and minimal and occasionally the more fully, formed and classical leaning soundscapes.

The depth and ambition of the project are neatly highlighted by the opening two tracks. The first, the title track, is a solo piece, a deft and delicate number built on a theme which seems to wander and reinvents itself throughout. This is then followed by an orchestral interpretation of the same, this time a more cinematic, wide-screen approach. If the former is a lightly sketched and sparingly hued watercolour, the latter is the vibrant oil rendering, vibrant and eye-catching.

But it is to the former, for the most part, that Jill looks for her creations. *Lunch In Manhattan* captures something of the pace and sophistication of the place that the title alludes to, a musical rendering of the busy streets as viewed through a restaurant window in a moment of calm and relaxation.

*The Turning of Time* is more cerebral, more thoughtful, and more poignant in its delivery. It is songs such as this that make the listener stop and muse on the nature of such an album. Most often, contemporary music at least is driven by the lyrical component, which takes the listener by the hand and leads them to a set conclusion, the writer making sure that they interpret the song in the way that they intended. Classical music in particular and instrumental and orchestral music in general leaves the listener to their own devices, to take from the song whatever they need and imbue it with whatever message or meaning is relative to their life.

And that is what I love about albums such as this. It suggests rather than pushes. It allows the listener to lead the way rather than showing them too clear a path. It is music with a different meaning for each who chooses to listen rather than trying to unite everyone in a common consensus.

*Rainy Sunday* paints its images through cascading notes falling into the mind of the listener, *Peaceful Escape* is, by its very nature, meditative and calming and the album rounds off as it began, the gentle waves of *Forever Love* then delivered a second time by a seductive and atmospheric orchestral take.

Not only a gorgeous album but one that is happy to meet the listener halfway and in doing so is accessible and relevant to everyone.

## Sleeping Bag Studios, September 2, 2022

### Jill Benson – *Dreamscapes* – Album Review

I tell ya folks...for myself personally, I can never really get enough piano music...never have, never will. It was the #1 sound I grew up with around the house when I was growing up...I'd roll out of bed still sleepy eyed, and my old man would be downstairs practicing away to start his morning. So for me, piano tunes aren't just accepted, they're truly beloved...I don't know that there's an instrument that I fundamentally like the sound of more if I'm being truthful with ya. I have my moments here & there with the violin too, but I pretty much always come back to the piano as being the most melodic instrument that we've ever created here on earth...the thing just sounds beautiful, am I right? You should hear the way Jill Benson plays it – I guarantee ya she understands what I'm saying...you can hear her connection with the piano & how strong it is in the way she plays – I've had an absolutely excellent time listening to *Dreamscapes* this week. Some folks have music inside'em, just waiting to come out I tell ya...and I'd have to imagine that Jill is indeed one of'em...this entire album sounds wonderful...like a moment in time that's meant to be.

The opening/title-track of this record sparkles with elegance and beauty from the lefts to the rights, and sets an exquisite standard that Jill continues to adhere to throughout this lineup of thirteen songs. On a technical front, *Dreamscapes* was released last year – but to be fair, she's rocking gently with a timeless style & sound that never gets old. The way this melody is played is fascinating when it comes right down to it...some spots in “Dreamscapes” will speed up, some will slow down...all intentional mind you, but it takes a spin or two through the distance of the entire record in order to be able to know that for certain. In any event, Jill plays “Dreamscapes” in such a clever way that it's bound to have you paying attention – and she'll follow it up with a risky move in having a second version appear directly after, with the “Dreamscapes Orchestral” variation. Would I recommend you all start putting your song twice sequentially on your albums? Heck no! Break those tunes up if you're even going to do that at all – chances are, in most circumstances, you're actually asking a lineup of tunes to wear out a song at a rate of 2:1...I've rarely, if ever, advised this is the best way to go about it and very rarely support having a song appear twice within one lineup. This MIGHT be one of those rare times however...personally, I can get behind how the “Dreamscapes Orchestral” coming after the original feels like a part 1 & part 2 type of scenario...you get the quaint beauty of the version at the start, and then hear how it expands into a more expansive idea, almost fantasy-driven...it definitely seems to work well enough to justify its back-to-back pairing.

However...I'm not even remotely kidding when I say that “Hometown Memories” basically erased all of my thoughts beforehand once it began – and I mean that in the best of ways. Sometimes we hear a song that is capable of practically stopping time around us...and “Hometown Memories” would be a perfect example of that in action. This melody that Jill has created...good lord...it could reduce you to tears, it could fill your heart with joy...we all might hear this differently as individuals on an emotional level. Personally I felt like it was BOTH of these things, and all at once...the balance in “Hometown Memories” was audibly staggering...sometimes it would have me reflecting on wonderful memories, and at other points, drifting into devastating self-reflection...and in my world, each of these things are a compliment to the chef – I'm all about music that makes you FEEL something, and this is certainly that. Right from the get-go in that opening line of the piano melody, you can feel the weight of “Hometown Memories” come crashing right over you...and for nearly three-minutes straight, Jill keeps us captivated completely. I love the writing, I love the way she plays it, I love absolutely EVERYTHING about this song.

“Twilight” is another pensive & thought-provoking gem for sure. All-in-all, Benson makes it crystal clear that she certainly has a place on the piano bench that she belongs – she's thriving in the way she plays her music, and it's 100% spectacular to listen to. I really enjoy the fact that she's got a

style of songwriting that can definitely stand proudly on its own..."Twilight" is further proof of the fact that Jill isn't just making background music, know what I mean? There's no doubt whatsoever that Benson's music would make the perfect soundtrack for many moments onscreen for sure, yes – but what's more impressive is the fact she's making instrumental music you can't take your ears off of to begin with. She's got an exceptional way of balancing the low-end of her melodies with the sparkling sounds on the surface...she knows when to add, when to subtract, when to let the space work its magic and have the notes ring out...Jill's an insightfully talented artist who definitely knows how to use her range of talents.

"Lunch In Manhattan" has arguably more groove and swagger to it – in terms of overall accessibility, I think she might even potentially have a song in this tune that could engage the masses even more. Maybe. I'm not saying that for a certain FACT...because I genuinely think she's got something spellbindingly special in "Hometown Memories" early on in this lineup, and in my heart of hearts, I'd hope that it's a song that speaks to us all...but...I suppose if you're looking for a piano-based tune that's a bit more on the upbeat side of sound, "Lunch In Manhattan" will probably do the trick real nicely. Even with the mid-section of this song heading into more of a melodic breakdown where the melody is played slower for a moment or two, I feel like the main hooks of this song stand a great chance of reaching the masses out there, whether or not they're fans of instrumental music, most people would be fans of a track like "Lunch In Manhattan." Great attitude and an inspired spark at the core of this cut.

That being said, the natural twinkle of "Dance Of The Mystical Forest" was another track I felt spoke right to me...there's really something gorgeous about the way that Jill chooses to use the space around her – she like, never overplays her hand...and that ain't easy to pull off when it's only YOU at the center of each song, know what I mean? Solo artists tend to overdo things all the time...not necessarily on purpose, but because of feeling that pressure to do...something...anything...to keep us fully entertained – and quite often, as a result, they can end up doing TOO MUCH. "Dance Of The Mystical Forest" is a shining example of how Jill seems to have this uncanny sense of how to give a song everything it could possibly need without an ounce more...and I love it. I get that it might not be the most mainstream song, or record you'll hear this year for that matter – but for those of us with a real love for the sound of the piano...I genuinely think you're going to love the authenticity in the way Jill Benson approaches her music. "Dance Of The Mystical Forest" has this wonderful blend of curious melody and sparkling beauty – it makes for another memorable highlight within this set of songs that are all worthy of much praise.

Almost right up there with how I feel about "Hometown Memories" in many ways, "The Turning Of Time" provided another sparkling highlight on the record for me personally. I dunno y'all...call me crazy – like I said at the very beginning of this review, you kind of have to spin through this set a couple times to get an understanding for how intentional and purposeful the pacing of these songs are...but once you get there & get your head around it & how Jill chooses to play the piano...I tell ya...she's nothing short of straight-up mesmerizing. You do start to notice a few patterns in her writing and structures, like how she'll give ya a great dose of the song at the very beginning, dial things back in the middle, and then ramp up to a finale of her own design...but hey man...if something in music truly works, then I'm 100% all for it. I really like the way Benson makes her music move, and how it in turn, moves us as a result – "The Turning Of Time" is another stunning gem on this record that can't be missed...I'd like to think that every person with a set of functional ears would be able to comprehend the audible beauty of this song. Listen to how she slows it all right down at around 1:20...notice how she's got your FULL ATTENTION, and the amount of sound is at its most minimal...you could hear a pin drop, and it'd scare the bejesus outta you – how cool is that? "The Turning Of Time" is an essential part of this lineup without question.

There's a real classic grace & curious sound at work in "Heavenly Playground" as well...Jill does a genuinely extraordinary job of finding the contrast between the light & the dark, the high-end & the low-end of her melodies...and it honestly makes such a massive difference in the realm of

instrumental music – her songs speak to you in a variety of ways. What's truly fantastic, is that everything you'll hear on *Dreamscapes* is impeccably cohesive as well...not only for what she's playing and how it sounds, but for how she goes about playing each song with such a similar, yet endlessly intriguing style of her own. It gets real hard to pick a complete favorite on this record – and that's a NICE PROBLEM to have if you ask me! Jill's made it extraordinarily tough to choose...ultimately, the reasons as to WHY that is, are largely the same from track to track...there are many similarities to be found within the material you'll find on this record, sure – but like I was tellin' ya earlier, if you find something that works with your music, stick with it! Let it be your guide...let it steer you in the right direction..."Heavenly Playground" might be somewhat full of moves we've heard from Jill at this point in the record, but it's absolutely no less enchanting, and still somehow completely welcome. I love the final moments of this tune as she scales up the melody one final time to let the notes ring out...it's so conclusive, and so truly satisfying.

The twinkling opening of "Peaceful Escape" quickly descends into deeper tones and rich notes from Jill's piano. I felt like I kept anticipating a moment where she'd somehow drop the ball...like...we ALL do, eventually, don't we? She IS human, ain't she? Yet time & time again, as I'd spin my way through the lineup of songs on *Dreamscapes*, that moment never came. I don't feel like Jill let any of us down with this set of songs...not remotely, not even for a second. It's fair to say that a bare-bones piano album isn't going to be for everyone of course...but like I was tellin' ya earlier also...in my heart of hearts, I sure hope a whole ton of you take a moment to listen to this album – Benson's a phenomenally understated talent, and she deserves your ear time. Songs as contemplative & moving as "Peaceful Escape" certainly earn your attention...this whole record is built with track after track that has uniquely exquisite vibes authentically beaming from the lefts to the rights...it's not only audibly classy stuff to listen to, it's like the sound of pure wonder in action. Artists like Jill genuinely get what the magic of melody is all about.

Depending on the emotions she's going for in the music she's playing, you can end up feeling different things. For the most part, I'd say that Jill's got a fairly positive sound running throughout the majority of her material...and not that a song like "Gone" would be considered to be negative in anyway, but you do feel that more isolated or desolated type of feeling associated with the sound. Just a bit more crystalline, a bit more cold or icy...but not without subtle bursts of warmth & sweetness to be found – overall, I felt like "Gone" was a great example of a piano-led odyssey that has real depth to its content. I was probably a bit more tossed up over whether or not it quite fit the lineup than I was with just about every other song in this set...but at the end of the day, we're not talking about anything so radical that it wouldn't still belong. It's a bit of an outlier in terms of its sound & demeanor I suppose, but still a valid composition and a melody well worth your time to listen to without question. "Gone" probably isn't going to be the happiest moment on the record for most listeners...so there's that...but that ain't the criteria for what does or doesn't make a great listening experience as far as I can remember. It's still a very well-played tune, it's still got a lot of imagination and emotional punch to it...I think it might get passed over on those first couple spins perhaps, but people will come around to what this contributes.

"Rainy Sunday" keeps the material within the more downtrodden terrain that "Gone" had led us into. What I really like about this song is the flowing keys of Jill's piano...you can hear the skill in the way she plays, but also the heart & the purpose here too...there's a lot of intent in the way she strikes the ivory, you know what I'm sayin' y'all? "Rainy Sunday" has a whole bunch of technique to it if you're listening closely...stuff that artists with proficient skillsets could tell ya about a lot better than I could – I'm just a writer & music fan that knows what he likes to hear...and for the most part, that's passion & interest. Jill has plenty of both, and you can hear how that leads her to victory on a song like "Rainy Sunday." I'd imagine this is one of those songs that really separates those that can really play the piano, from those that are doin' this thang on a part-time basis with half their heart invested. The way that Benson is able to communicate such extraordinary emotion in the way her fingers flow over the keys and her natural touch on the piano...it's something else to experience y'all..."Rainy

Sunday” has got a brilliant melody to it, and it’s the kind of song that’ll really send you drifting into the bliss of your memories and thoughts.

I felt like “Forever Love” was one of the most profound songs on *Dreamscapes*...another cut that seems to be about half-happy, half-sad, with a great level of contrast to the emotions fueling the material. It’s almost like the song is saying goodbye, but thanks for the memories...know what I mean? One of those tunes that says don’t cry because it’s over, smile because it happened...those kind of bittersweet emotions that enter our lives every so often. It’s a beautifully understated tune...much of this whole lineup really has been all along as its played – like I mentioned before, Jill doesn’t overstuff things with pretentious solos or gratuitous drawn out ideas – she finds a way to give a song everything it needs, and gives you every ounce of magic in the melody that you wanna hear. “Forever Love” has that music-box type of sound...vivid like you can see it in your mind, and vibrant enough that you can feel it in your heart – I might not know much about technical skills & all that, but I can certainly say that this is pretty much all we could ever ask for or hope to hear, is it not? “Forever Love” would definitely be right up there at the top of my list of songs I love most on this album...as subtle as it may appear – and does – there’s also not a doubt in my mind that Jill knocked this song straight outta the park into next Friday.

Similar to how things started, things end in the same fashion, with “Forever Love” being followed by the “Forever Love Orchestral” version. As much as I love each song...I’m again gonna advise caution – there IS risk in this kind of move, and that risk is potentially burning out the people’s admiration & love for a song twice as quickly as the rest. In addition to that – is it just my ears, or does each orchestral variation seem to come out significantly lower in volume too? Don’t get me wrong...at the beginning of listening to an album by any artist or band, we’ll always take more of what we love – so YES...right now, I’m 100% in favor of getting more in the mix with the finale of “Forever Love Orchestral” and spending more time with this tune...but if I’m being realistic, I know it’s very hard to make that feeling continue to last over time & repeat spins. So be careful my friend...we have a tendency to do that with the songs we love the most, and in the process, we can end up making them more skipped past than any other song as a result of hearing them twice as much...make sense? Ain’t no doubt about its beauty, and no doubt about its charm – and the orchestral vibe to both “Forever Love” and the record’s title track give it a majestic type of feeling that works wonders too...all I’m advocating for is to care for that, and preserve it as best as we can. There’s all kinds of methods to release music in today’s world from EPs to albums to singles & back again...I always advise caution in including a song twice on one record when there are so many means at our disposal from audio to video in this day & age...but I’m definitely not disputing the quality of the ideas and the content, not the performance or the heart involved either – Jill’s great at what she does, and I highly suspect that she’s going to continue to excel in her craft & each experience with her music will be as memorable as it is entertaining. Wonderful job on *Dreamscapes* my friend – keep it up.

Hear more of Jill Benson at Apple Music, right here:  
<https://music.apple.com/us/artist/jill-benson/1451990066>

# Achievements

## Education and Training

1976-1987	Private Flute and Piano Lessons (1976-1987)
1984-1986	Private lessons and music clinics under Karen Gifford, Donald Jackson, Gregory Dennis, Harold Wildung, John Johnson, Robert Spevacek, Walter Lamble, Dennis Loy, Francesco Italiano
1987-1990	University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point (Vocal and instrumental music education)

## Experience

1987	Hope Lutheran Church Choir (Assistant Director)
1993 to present	Private piano, voice and flute instructor

## Awards

1982	1st place, flute solo
1982	2nd place, vocal solo
1983	1st place, flute solo
1983	1st place, flute quartet
1984	2nd place, flute choir
1984	2nd place, vocal solo
1984	2nd place, flute solo
1984	1st place, flute trio
1985	Star 1st rating, flute solo
1985	Star 1st rating, vocal solo
1986-1987	Voted class band president
1987	1st rating, flute choir (as director)
1987	Star 1st flute and vocal solos,
1987	State solo & ensemble competition, first place
1987	UW-Stevens Point Vocal Scholarship (audition-based)
1987	Mineral Point Music Boosters Scholarship
1987	John Philip Sousa Band Award (National award)
1986	State solo & ensemble contest participation, flute solo
1986	State solo & ensemble contest participation, vocal solo

## Performance Experience

1980-1983	Tell It Singers, vocals
1980-1984	5th, 6th, 7th, 8th grade band, flute
1983-1984	First chair, flute
1983	Jazz band, tenor saxophone
1983	"You're a Good Man Charlie Brown", Snoopy
1984-1987	Swing choir (audition based)
1984	Southern Eight Honors Band, Michael Leckrone (audition based)
1985	"Guys and Dolls". soloist
1985	Flute quartet
1985	Flute choir
1985	Swing choir
1985	"Godspell", Robin
1985	Southern Eight Honors Choir, Clay Dawson (audition based)
1986	WNBA All State Band, Miles H. Johnson (audition based)
1986	Jazz band
1986	"Cats", ensemble
1986	World of Music Festival, participant
1986	Wind symphony
1986	Madrigal singers
1986	Show choir
1986	Flute duet
1986	Vocal duet
1986	Flute choir
1986	Jazz ensemble
1986	Mineral Point City Band
1986	Southern Eight Honors Band, John Paynter (audition based)
1986	"Little Shop of Horrors", Ronnette, ShakeRag Players
1987	WMBA All State Honor Band, Dr. John Zdechlik
1987	Mineral Point City Band
1987	Piccolo solo, "Stars And Stripes Forever"
1991-1993	Spun Gold, 50s & 60s cover band
2000-2018	Various Cover Bands, Racine, Kenosha & Illinois
2018-Present	Time and Gravity, flute, keyboard & vocals

2018-Present      The Conviction Band, flute, keyboard & vocals  
2018-Present      MadBark Band, flute, keyboard & vocals

## Solo Releases

November 2021    "Dreamscapes" (LP)  
November 2021    "Chasing the Dream" (single)  
December 2021    "A Midnight Snowfall" (single)  
January 2022      "Unnamed" (single)  
January 2022      "Reflections" (single)  
March 2022        "Reminiscence" (single)  
March 2022        "Kintsugi" (single)  
April 2022         "Old Relics" (single)  
November 2022    "Reminiscence"

## Discography

2018                The Fake ID's, "Suspicious Behavior" (flute, backing vocals)  
2018                Mykal Bass, "I Wanna Be You" (vocals)  
2019                Bryan Soland, "California 101" (flute, backing vocals)

# Contact & Social Media information

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