

# SUZANNE CIANI

Suzanne Ciani is a composer, recording artist, and pioneer in the field of electronic music. She is best loved for her 15 albums of original music, which feature her performances in a broad array of expressions: pure electronic, solo piano, piano with orchestra, and piano with jazz ensemble. No matter the medium, Ciani's music communicates the special intimacy, passion, and sensitivity that has become her trademark and prompted fans to buy over a million of her albums. On her latest recording *SILVER SHIP*, her first CD of new material in five years, she uses the sea as an inspirational starting point and combines her early classical acoustic-piano training and exploratory electronic-music roots to achieve the most mature musical statement of her career.

Ciani's early albums were entirely electronic. She slowly began incorporating acoustic instrumentation and eventually released several solo acoustic-piano CDs. She also has recorded with full orchestra (*DREAM SUITE*) and with *The Wave*, her own group of top jazz musicians. *SILVER SHIP* slips back-and-forth between these styles as it combines *The Wave's* acoustic instrumentation (piano, flute, oboe, sax, cello, guitar and fretless bass) with rich synthesizer textures, including leading-edge string arrangements. The new album and other recordings by Ciani (pronounced cha-nee) are available in quality book and record stores nationwide as well as online at sites such as amazon.com, digital download locations and Ciani's own [www.sevwave.com](http://www.sevwave.com).

Ciani's family came from Italy, and after many visits, the country has become her second home. About half the material on the new CD was penned there while most of the rest was composed in her Northern California home perched on a cliff above the Pacific Ocean. Many of *SILVER SHIP's* song titles reference the ocean ("Wine Dark Sea," "Open Seas," "Sargasso Sea") or islands ("Capri," "Stromboli").

"I have always been inspired by the sea," she says. There is something eternal about the rhythmic aspect of one wave following another. I came to appreciate that same symmetry in oscillating sound waves when I was first exploring electronic music. Also, the shape of a wave informed the structure of my early compositions, building and then receding. My first album was titled *SEVEN WAVES*, my record company is Seventh Wave Productions, and in the early days I called my compositions 'Waves' and simply numbered them. And *Silver Ship* is a metaphor for my willingness to "set sail" to find beauty again after the difficult post divorce "shipwrecked" years.

But in addition to Ciani's recent life experiences and personal growth, she brings a rich and varied musical history to her latest recording. After hearing albums of romantic music by Grieg and Rachmaninoff when she was seven, Suzanne taught herself to play piano and read music. She received her formal training at Wellesley College and went on to the University of California at Berkeley where she received her Masters Degree in Music Composition. More importantly, she met and studied under three of the founders of electronic music – John Chowning, Max Matthews and Don Buchla.

Suzanne became entranced with the ability to produce music with a machine, and she became a devotee of synthesizers for the next two decades. Ciani was one of the very first women to make a name for herself in the field. She began her experimentation with a Buchla synth (the interface was done with dials, sliding knobs, patch cords and voltage generators rather than a keyboard). She would program it to compose and play endless compositions and then leave the massive machine running for months at a time.

In 1975 Ciani moved to New York City, contributed to the SoHo art scene, founded the Electronic Center for New Music, and began introducing musicians such as minimalist Philip Glass and Patrick Moraz of Yes to the possibilities of synthesizers. With the goal of eventually recording her own music, she established Ciani Musica, Inc, which quickly became one of the foremost commercial production companies in the country, featuring Suzanne as a top "sound designer." Soon she was in high-demand by the Fortune 500 companies and created award-winning musical scores and logos for Coca-Cola (the Pop 'n' Pour campaign), Columbia Pictures, AT&T, Pepsi, GE, Merrill Lynch and hundreds of others. Beyond the corporate world, Ciani was in demand to bring her synthesized sounds to pop and jazz records (Meco's "Star Wars" platinum hit, Spyro Gyra, the

Starland Vocal Band and CTI jazz artists) as well as projects such as the movie "Fame" and a modern opera by Gian Carlo Menotti (she created an original electronic score for one of his New York productions). Suzanne also composed and performed the soundtrack for Lily Tomlin's movie "The Incredible Shrinking Woman," and two feature documentaries on the life and teachings of Mother Teresa.

These successes allowed Suzanne to start releasing her own music on major labels beginning with the classic synthesizer album SEVEN WAVES (first released on JVC in Japan and by Atlantic/Finnadar in the US). With her next album, THE VELOCITY OF LOVE (first released on RCA), the title track became #1 on the newly-emerging new age and contemporary instrumental radio stations. Her music helped define this new musical genre. Next followed five releases on Private Music/Windham Hill/BMG, including the romantic NEVERLAND and HISTORY OF MY HEART, the first PIANISSIMO (solo piano) and the Italy-inspired HOTEL LUNA. Upon establishing her own independent label, she released DREAM SUITE (recorded in Moscow with a 70-piece orchestra), two more acoustic-piano solo outings (PIANISSIMO II and III), SUZANNE CIANI AND THE WAVE: LIVE! (her jazziest product which also was filmed for PBS broadcast and DVD release), TURNING and two collections: MEDITATIONS and PURE ROMANCE. While always following her own muse, her recordings became some of the bestsellers in the field and earned numerous accolades and awards including five GRAMMY nominations. In addition, Ciani has toured throughout the United States, Italy, Spain and Asia.

On SILVER SHIP all the tracks are composed, produced and arranged by Ciani (with string arrangements by Mitch Farber). Playing the acoustic piano and synthesizer parts, Ciani is joined by her band, The Wave, including reed player Paul McCandless (Oregon, Bela Fleck, Paul Winter), flautist Matt Eakle (Dave Grisman Quintet, Jerry Garcia), guitarist Teja Bell (Ancient Future, Georgia Kelly), and fretless bassist extraordinaire Michael Manring (Michael Hedges, Will Ackerman). Also featured is cellist Joe Hebert, who has recorded with Suzanne previously.

The energy of the album flows like waves with emotional peaks and troughs. The recording begins with the poignant "For Lise," written for Suzanne's friend who was walking in the woods with her classmate 30 years ago, and after they decided to go their own ways, Lise's friend was murdered. "It has haunted my friend all these years and when I heard the story, it affected me too." The next piece, "Wine Dark Sea," a reference to Homer's "Odyssey," shifts gears to more world fusion and features McCandless' astonishing and bluesy improvisations around the main melody. "Stromboli," an Italian island famed for the affair of film director Roberto Rossellini and Ingrid Bergman, is Ciani's tribute to the style of Italian movie music. "Capri," an Italian island where Ciani lived for six months, features energetic jazz flute improv by Matt Eakle. Ciani explores her classical roots on the somber "Eclipse." With "Open Seas," Ciani captures the joy and freedom of sailing (and also revisits the past since it includes wave sounds created on the Buchla and Eventide SP0219 several decades ago). The jazzy "Dentecane" was named after the small town in Italy where it was composed. "Snow Crystals" features McCandless' oboe beautifully entwined with Suzanne's piano. The bittersweet, melancholy "Sargasso Sea" is a timeless piano-cello duet inspired by a mysterious place in the ocean with very little wind and much seaweed where sailing ships were often stranded.

On rare occasions Suzanne utilizes a vocalist on one of her songs. On the title track of SILVER SHIP, Ciani wrote music to go with lyrics provided by her sister, poet and visual artist Mary Ciani Saslow (who designs all of Ciani's covers for Seventh Wave), and enlisted singer Valerie Wilson, whom Suzanne worked with on advertising jingles years ago in New York. A lullaby, "Silver Ship" concerns itself with "sailing off to sleep and to this other world of dreams, a psychic space where we can live other lives before coming home to what we call the real world. It's also a metaphor for any of the personal spiritual journeys we go on during our lives," explains Suzanne.

"SILVER SHIP is a recording that bridges between the East Coast and the West Coast, between Europe and the United States, between my early days and the present, between acoustic and electronic sounds, and between joy and sadness. All I can say is: Ride the waves."

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