



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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For downloadable images, visit <http://itvs.org/films/mary-lou-williams>

***Mary Lou Williams: The Lady Who Swings the Band***  
**Premieres on Public Television in April 2015**  
**Iconic Pianist Fought to Create in a World that Could Not See Past Her Race or Gender**



*Mary Lou Williams in the 1940s*  
Credit: William Gottlieb, Library of Congress

(Boston, MA) – Filmmaker Carol Bash’s documentary ***Mary Lou Williams: The Lady Who Swings the Band*** brings to the screen one of the most innovative yet unsung jazz pianists, composers, and arrangers. “Trailblazer,” “pioneer,” and “awesome,” are some of the adjectives that international jazz artists today like Geri Allen, Carmen Lundy, and Terri Lyne Carrington use to describe Mary Lou Williams. Funded by Independent Television Service (ITVS) and distributed nationally by American Public Television (APT), the film will premiere on public television stations in April as part of Jazz Appreciation Month [check local listings for date and time in your area].

Working at a time when women were expected to stay at home and raise children, Mary Lou Williams forged her own path and created some of the most sophisticated big band hits for Andy Kirk, Benny Goodman, Duke Ellington, and many other popular orchestras in the 1930s and ‘40s. She was truly a woman who swung the band.

In the 1950s, jazz icons like Dizzy Gillespie, Thelonious Monk, and Bud Powell regularly visited Mary Lou Williams at her Harlem apartment to gain knowledge and inspiration. And in the 1970s, after her conversion, Mary Lou Williams took jazz in whole new direction—inside the Catholic Church.

But away from the piano, Williams was a woman in a “man’s world,” a black person in a “whites only” society, an ambitious artist who dared to be different and struggled against the imperatives of being a “star.” Above all, she did not fit the (still) prevailing notions of where genius comes from or what it looks like. Time and again, she pushed back against a world that said, “You can’t” and said, “I can.” It nearly cost her everything.

*Mary Lou Williams: The Lady Who Swings the Band* features Academy Award-nominated actress Alfre Woodard as the narrated voice of Mary Lou Williams and contemporary musical performances by Geri Allen, Terri Lyne Carrington, Carmen Lundy, Esperanza Spalding, and a big band conducted by Wycliffe Gordon.

Visit the *Mary Lou Williams: The Lady Who Swings the Band* companion website (<http://itvs.org/films/mary-lou-williams>) for further information about the film, including an interview with the filmmaker, preview clips, and more.



## About the Filmmaker

**Carol Bash (Producer/Director)** is the Founder and President of Paradox Films. She has over 15 years of experience in media production, with a solid background in independent filmmaking and broadcast journalism. Carol has worked with several prestigious documentary production companies in roles ranging from producer, director, cinematographer, coordinating producer, archival researcher and associate producer. Most notably, she worked with Firelight Films on *Freedom Riders*, which won three Primetime Emmy Awards and premiered on *American Experience*; Two-Tone Productions on *Banished*, which premiered at the 2007 Sundance Film Festival and aired on *Independent Lens*; Kunhardt Productions on the groundbreaking four-part PBS series *African American Lives*; and with Firelight Films on *A Place of Our Own*, which premiered at the 2004 Sundance Film Festival and was broadcast on *Independent Lens*. In addition, Carol has produced and directed several short promotional films for PBS, World Channel, and non-profit organizations. Prior to her career as an independent filmmaker, she worked in broadcast television at CBS News and the BBC.

## CREDITS

Produced and Directed by	Carol Bash
Edited by	Sandra Christie
Co-Producer	Stacey Holman
Executive Producer	Stanley Nelson
Cinematographers	Robert Shepard James Richards Michael Chin
Original Music	Sumi Tonooka

## About APT

American Public Television (APT) has been a leading distributor of high-quality, top-rated programming to the nation's public television stations since 1961. In 2014, APT distributed one-third of the top 100 highest-rated public television titles in the U.S. Among its 300 new program titles per year, APT programs include prominent documentaries, news and current affairs programs, dramas, how-to programs, children's series and classic movies. *America's Test Kitchen From Cook's Illustrated*, *Rick Steves' Europe*, *Live From the Artists Den*, *Doc Martin*, *Nightly Business Report*, *Midsomer Murders*, *Vera*, *NHK Newslines*, *Lidia's Kitchen*, *Globe Trekker*, *Simply Ming*, and *P. Allen Smith's Garden Home* join numerous documentaries and performance programs popular with public television viewers. APT licenses programs internationally through its APT Worldwide service. Now in its 10th year, Create® TV — featuring the best of public television's lifestyle programming — is distributed by APT. APT also distributes WORLD™, public television's premier news, science, and documentary channel. To find out more about APT's programs and services, visit [APTonline.org](http://APTonline.org).

## About ITVS

Independent Television Service (ITVS) funds, presents, and promotes award-winning documentaries on public television, innovative new media projects on the Web, and the Emmy® Award-winning weekly series *Independent Lens* on Monday nights at 10 p.m. on PBS. Mandated by Congress in 1988 and funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, ITVS has brought thousands of independently produced programs to American audiences. For more visit [itvs.org](http://itvs.org)