

Jazz musician Joan Cartwright on being a Renaissance woman



Dr. Joan Cartwright, age 74, began singing at the age of 4 and never stopped. An explosive jazz and blues singer, composer, and educator, she has performed in the U.S. and Europe for 30 years—and she holds a doctorate in business administration. A fervent advocate for women in music, she spearheads [Women in Jazz South Florida, Inc.](#), a nonprofit educational organization that promotes female musicians globally. She's written and published [14 books](#), including her own original music. She also publishes two magazines—[MusicwomanMagazine.com](#) and [MusicmanMagazine.com](#)—hosts a [podcast](#), and puts out a monthly newsletter. As if that wasn't enough for one person, she teaches public speaking four days a week at a local college.

I interviewed this fascinating, multitalented woman hoping to find out the secret of her nonstop energy.

Tell me about yourself. Where did you grow up and what inspired you to become a jazz musician?

My parents were both military and served in World War II. My mother was an entrepreneur. She sold Avon, Tupperware, china, girdles, Shaklee, everything except the Brooklyn Bridge. She would have sold that if it was for sale. My father worked for the U.S. Railway Mail Service. I was brought up in New York City.

We were music people. My father loved classical music and jazz, and he had all the big band music, singers, albums, and a beautiful stereo. I played the piano, but records taught me the American songbook. I internalized scatting listening to Ella Fitzgerald,

Sarah Vaughan, Carmen McRae, Dakota Staton. I started singing at 4, and by the time I was 27, I was known as a bebop singer in New York.

I moved to Florida in 1984 because there was a flourishing jazz scene in Fort Lauderdale. I loved being a big fish in a small pond.

It seems like you've had at least five careers.

More than five—dancer, singer, writer, entrepreneur, web designer. Right now I'm a publisher and professor, but from 80 to 90, I plan to paint. I'm a Renaissance woman.

Why is it so important to support women in music?

My soapbox is that women are marginalized in the industry. We earn less than 15 percent of a \$30 million to \$40 million industry. There are whole orchestras with only men in them funded by our tax dollars. The Black community is ravaged by bad music produced by white producers. The messages are in the music, which downgrades women. It's devastating the Black community.

How did you have time for a personal life?

Somehow, I fit in four (now ex) husbands, two children, five grandchildren, and six great-grandchildren. I'm free now. I live in singular bliss.

What was your biggest obstacle?

I married four big obstacles. Two were brutal. I sang love songs and came home to a jealous man. None of them were supportive. Since then, I've had lovers but couldn't do the marriage thing anymore. I love men, don't get me wrong, but you shouldn't marry them.

What's your secret to being accomplished in so many areas?

I'm a Sagittarius with Taurus rising. I just keep going straight ahead. You're going to stop one day; why stop in the middle of the stream? If you're not doing things, you're dead. You gotta live, and to live means activity, to do.

What do you think other people your age should know about staying productive and relevant?

Join a community with young people. And get them to show you technology. I know more about computers than my students. I was a web designer in the '90s. Study something. Learn how to do something. My students teach me a lot.

Best advice for aging well?

Only do what you absolutely want to do. And slow down. I've slowed down. I used to be

on the road all the time but now love being home. When I travel these days–I just came back from Spain and Switzerland–it’s as a tourist, not working. I only do what I absolutely want to do. If I don’t want to do it, I’m not gonna do it.



That’s it! Thanks for reading. And if you want to chime in with your two cents on what this newsletter should include, email us at Info@LifeExperienced.com.

Until next time,
Erica

Copyright © 2021 Life Experienced, All rights reserved.
You are receiving this email because you opted in via our website.

Our mailing address is:

Life Experienced
2308 Mount Vernon Ave # 758
Alexandria, VA 22301-1328

[Add us to your address book](#)