

WHO THE HECK IS TETEL DI BABUYA?

I am Tetel Di Babuya, singer, songwriter and violinist, born in Brazil. I am also someone else, but with each passing day I'm becoming more and more Tetel Di Babuya, born in song.

WHAT IS IT ABOUT MUSIC?

To me, music is the closest thing to a drug, with the benefit of having only positive side effects. It's addictive but there is no reason to lay off it. It's one of the few things in life you can enjoy without pacing yourself. No matter what, you won't overuse it. And, guess what? Even if there was such a thing as musical overdose, to me that would be one heck of a way to go.

I haven't met (so far) a single human being who isn't in love with at least one style of music. Music moves us and connects us to ourselves. I was very fortunate to learn that from a young age.

MY YOUTH - MY DAD - MY START

My home was a musical one. My father, a psychopharmacologist (I had to copy paste that from Google), was a drummer, singer and pianist in his youth. Even though he chose a career in medicine, he IS a musician....end of story! When you are as passionate about music as he is, no matter what you do in life, music stays within you.

My dad was the one who enrolled me in violin classes when I was 9 years old. He took me to every single class, rehearsal and concert up to the age where I suddenly started to feel like having my dad around was cramping my style. I so regret that now. Advice to kids: let your mom and dad hold your hand and be around you wherever you go....at least 'til you're 40. Trust me on that one.

But let's go back to my story. Having your kids learn music from a young age is, in my opinion, the best thing you can do for them. Once I had music in my life, I never really felt alone. Music developed my sense of self and paved the way for me to become the adult I am now, for better or worse, because playing the violin well requires a certain level of neurosis. Believe me, after a few years of 8 hours of practice a day, you realize you're always out of tune to some extent. By the time you're a professional violinist, you start to wonder if the whole world is out of tune. Or is it just me?

ME AND MY VIOLIN

Tuning difficulties aside, the violin really is a spectacularly beautiful instrument. They say the violin is the instrument that most closely resembles the expressiveness of the human voice. I was always so intrigued by the striking quality the violin has that this fascination led me back to school to look further into it. That wound up when I received my Master's Degree in Music. My research was all about expression in musical performance. Of course you won't find any papers under the name Tetel Di Babuya.

(FLASHBACK)

I skipped ahead too fast. I forgot to mention that I lived in the USA when I was seven. My dad was invited to teach some classes at Stanford and he was brave enough to bring the whole family with him: my mom, my two older sisters and me. Those couple of years were intense, and after that the English language never parted from my heart. My favorite part of going to school in California? My classroom had a bunny and a turtle. Yes, I'm pretty easy to please.

Back to my old friend, the violin. I started playing in orchestras when I was 13. Wow, what a rush that was! I felt as if I was stage diving. Make no mistake, Shostakovich can be heavy metal too. When I got to university, I found the beauty of art school: no one judges you for wearing Havaianas flip flops to class. Or maybe they did, who knows? I was too busy making music to notice.

ME AND MY VOICE

Throughout my whole life, singing was always something I could do to remind myself of who I really was. Even when I became a professional violinist, my hobby was singing, such is my obsession with music. Singing kept me grounded. When the violin was giving me all sorts of hard times (violinists can relate, I'm sure), singing was like a nurturing grandma soothing me with home baked chocolate chips cookies and lactose-free milk. I never imagined I would become a singer, I just always felt I was lucky that I had my own personal nana living inside my throat.

Apart from singing, one thing has kept me relatively sane so far, and that is my husband. Igor. He is professional violinist at the highest world-class level, and he shares my passion for music and cats. What I like best about him is how his name makes the best letters for tattoos.

THANK YOU, ELLA!

Where was I? I speak of Igor and time stands still. Oh, right, I was about to say that everything changed for me the first time I heard Ella Fitzgerald. It was like a window to a new universe inside me.

"Who is this lady? What style is that? Oh...THAT'S JAZZ!?! Note to self: I LOVE JAZZ!"

That form of artistic expression spoke to the very core of me and I just knew I had to try and sing the best I could. I didn't care if I had a good voice or a bad voice, I simply had to sing.

I wish I could say that after having that epiphany I just bravely dove head first into it. Unfortunately, that's not how it happened. You see, comfort and habit are funny things. I was very comfortable following the road I had envisioned for myself as a classical violinist. It felt so safe, incomparably less scary than hearing the voices in my head telling me to change career paths. Don't get me wrong, I see now that, in many ways, being a classical violinist can be equally as hard, but it was a difficulty I knew. The unknown had some mythical power over me, so for many many years I chose familiar demons.

ME AND MY SONGWRITING

Ever since I was little I enjoyed writing poetry as a form of (very private) self-expression, sort of like a diary. My main topics were always love, at the time (and for a while) platonic.

Much to my surprise, a few years ago I got the unexpected itch to start writing lyrics and setting them to music. I guess the years of suffering for impossible loves and turning them into poetry paid off because I just did what I used to do and the lyrics started flowing from my mind. This time I had a great guy by my side and the hopeless romantic in me couldn't find a better theme to write and sing about.

I feel that lyrics make or break a song. Like everyone, I feel a lot of stuff. The next step is I magnify these feelings so it naturally becomes art, not real life. Then I sing it and get to live my self-created alternate realities. Then I keep trying to do it all again and again, but better.

I believe life would be chaos without humor (especially the ironic sarcastic type) and love. That's what I try to incorporate in my songwriting. I hope it comes through.

ME AND TETEL DI BABUYA

I'm not sure why, and maybe it's better not to dig too deeply into it, but at some point I just couldn't keep up the charade any longer. I felt like I was living someone else's life and that was a most disturbing feeling to carry around. The minute I decided to pursue my true passion, I started becoming Tetel and, all of a sudden, things started falling into place. Getting out of bed used to be so hard before. Well, not anymore. The truth is, trying to be someone you're not really drains you prune-dry. As soon as I allowed myself to follow this new musical path, the person I was always meant to be came alive: meet Tetel Di Babuya.

After Tetel was born, a ton of work has been going on. I'm constantly trying to improve her in all aspects. After all, she is my better half. She needs to do our job well. I'm counting on her to express our artistic vision.

We work together really well. She orders me around and I try to do as she tells me while messing up as little as possible. Sometimes she forgets I have to sleep, I guess she's been locked in so long she has a lot to put out there.

When we recorded our first album, *Meet Tetel Di Babuya*, it was of course nerve racking but, at the same time, it felt like we had done that so many times before, it felt natural and familiar and uplifting. That's when I really understood what being comfortable feels like. To me, it's feeling like you're exactly where you're supposed to be, doing exactly what you're supposed to be doing, regardless of how much future uncertainty is involved. Gladly, that feeling hasn't left me since Tetel came into my life.

Now for some hard facts:

Born: March 14th, 1986 in Araçatuba, São Paulo, Brasil

Death: Hopefully of music overdose at 102

Beginnings:

Universidade Livre de Música Tom Jobim, 1995/2003

Degrees received while wearing flip flops:

Bachelor of Violin at University of São Paulo, 2004/2009

Masters Degree in Music at Universidade Estadual de São Paulo (UESP), 2018/2020

Sing, woman, sing!

Classical vocal training with Manuela Freua

Jazz masterclasses with singer Alissa Sanders

Vocal coaching with IVA certified teacher Claudio Olliver

Performance and Production with Bob Karcy, Grammy Nominated Producer

You can never have too much education:

Piano and arrangement classes with Daniel Grajew

Basics of sound engineering with João Baracho

Basics of Drawing, Senac São Paulo (Off topic, I know)

Violin classes with Emmanuele Baldini (Spalla of São Paulo Symphony Orchestra)

Violin Classes with Betina Stegman (Theatro Municipal de São Paulo)

Violin Classes with Davi Graton (São Paulo Symphony Orchestra)

Violin Masterclass with Peter Zazofsky

Violin Masterclass with Carmelo de los Santos

Chamber music Masterclass with Grzgorz Kotow

Violin Masterclass with Evgenia Popova

Other ways I once made a living:

English teacher at Personal Touch Idioms

English teacher at Cultura Inglesa São Paulo

Violin teacher at Daycoval Musicantes Project

Violin teacher at Estudio Musical

Tetel Di Babuya Recording

Exclusive Arkadia Records Recording Artist, 2021

First Album to be released in 2022:

Meet Tetel Di Babuya

(10 original songs, plus) one standard

Produced by Grammy Nominated Producer Bob Karcy

Gigs at São Paulo jazz venues before COVID:

Tonton Jazz
Bistrot Esmeralda
JazzB
Madeleine Jazz Bar
All of Jazz
Then enters COVID..

Orchestras I stage dived:

São Paulo Youth Symphony Orchestra, 1999/2003
Chamber Orchestra of University of São Paulo, 2003/2005
Heliopolis Symphony Orchestra, 2007
University of São Paulo Symphony Orchestra, 2013/2018
São Paulo Symphony Orchestra, 2013/2018
Bachiana Philharmonic Orchestra, 2013/2018
Municipal Orchestra of Jundiaí, 2012/2013
Theatro São Pedro Orchestra, 2017/2018

Tours I've been on before Tetel Di Babuya was born:

Europe Tour 2013 with São Paulo Symphony Orchestra (France, England, Ireland, Germany, Austria, Switzerland)
Brasil Tour 2014 with São Paulo Symphony Orchestra (Rio de Janeiro, Curitiba, Belo Horizonte, Salvador, Porto Alegre)

Violin miscellanea:

Phantom of the Opera, São Paulo 2018/2019
Soloist in Limiar String Orchestra, Poços de Caldas Festival Orchestra and Laetare String Orchestra
Member of Music Academy Project of University of São Paulo Symphony Orchestra
Camerata Schaeffler