

Bio: Troels Jensen and Miriam Mandipira

For both Troels Jensen and Miriam Mandipira – who perform together on the Straighter Shooter duo recording *Careless Love* – the blues took hold at an early age. Born in Copenhagen, Jensen grew up in a musical household: His uncle Vagn played guitar in a dance orchestra; a friend of his father “enchanted the ladies,” he recalls, with his Swedish-styled harmonica playing. At age 13, his aunt snuck him into Jazz Club Chr. den 9. in Copenhagen to see blues pianist Memphis Slim. It was a life-changing experience for young Troels.

“The first time I heard Memphis Slim, I knew I wanted to be a part of that brotherhood,” Jensen says.

In his early twenties, he launched the Delta Blues Band, earning recognition in its own right while also performing and touring with the likes of Sonny Terry & Brownie McGhee, Link Wray, Bo Diddley and his inspiration, Memphis Slim.

Jensen considers performing with Wray (“I learned a lot playing with him”) and Diddley (“he was a very funny man, full of jokes”) as career highlights. Another highlight came “when Sister Rosetta Tharpe kindly encouraged me to keep on playing the blues,” he says.

Miriam Mandipira was born in Zimbabwe in 1977 and moved to Denmark in 2007. She was drawn at a young age to such vocalists as Billie Holiday, Otis Redding, Percy Sledge and South African artists Letta Mbulu and Miriam Makeba. As a youth, she received classical training as a vocalist and violist, but her musical direction changed upon joining the Luckstreet Blues band, which whom she first performed in 1995.

Mandipira explains her passion for the blues: “When I listen to the blues and now also, when I sing the blues, it almost feels like lying is out of the question. The ‘no sugar coating or trying to soften the blow of the truth’ nature of the blues appeals to me. I tend to wear my emotions on my sleeve, and the blues allow me to be myself in its deep yet free expression. To me, gospel is truthful yet clean, while soul is bare, yet still holding the door slightly open for reconciliation. But, the blues... you tell it like it is at all cost!”

After joining Luckstreet Blues, Mandipira honed her craft as a vocalist over the next decade. In 2005, she moved to South Africa, where she performed with Strange Brew in the Gauteng area, including the Blues Room in Johannesburg.

Miriam moved to Denmark in 2007, becoming active in the jazz and blues scene. She formed her own band, Miriam Mandipira and Her Danish Friends, in 2011, and also has playing and recording with numerous bands, including the Delta Blues Band, with whom she first appeared at the Åmål Blues festival in 2014.

“The first time I heard Miriam was at a jazz festival in southern Denmark,” Jensen remembers. “I knew immediately that I wanted to work with that voice.”

The festival was in 2009 or 2010 in Femø, Mandipira says. “He introduced himself and asked if I would be interested in recording one of his songs, ‘Take Me Home.’ Right away, I was impressed by Troels’ atypical gentlemanly manner. It turned out he is as generous a person as he is a musician,” she says.

Jensen and Mandipira appear together in My Love, the 2017 band release, credited as “Troels Jensen & the Healers featuring Miriam Mandipira.” Careless Love is their first recording as a duo.



www.jensen-mandipira.dk www.straightshooter.dk