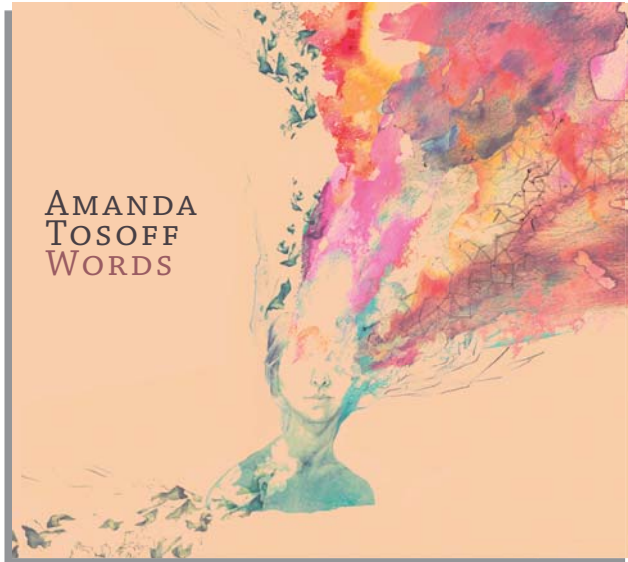


# AMANDA TOSOFF

PIANIST, COMPOSER, BANDLEADER

WWW.AMANDATOSOFF.COM



## AMANDA TOSOFF - WORDS

OCEANS BEYOND RECORDS 2016

RELEASE DATE - SPRING 2016

- |                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. DAFFODILS (6:05)<br>poem by William Wordsworth                        | 8. THE FIRST DAY OF WINTER (4:40)<br>poem by Laura Lush                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 2. COOL EMBRACE (4:51)<br>lyrics by Melissa Mansfield                    | 9. LITTLE BIRD (3:50)                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 3. SIMULTANEOUS WINDOWS (4:08)                                           | FELICITY WILLIAMS voice<br>AMANDA TOSOFF piano<br>ALEX GOODMAN guitar<br>(ALL TRACKS EXCEPT 4)<br>JON MAHARAJ bass<br>MORGAN CHILDS drums<br>REBEKAH WOLKSTEIN violin<br>(1, 2, 5, 7)<br>AMY LAING cello<br>(1, 2, 3, 5, 7) |
| 4. TOO LATE (2:08)<br>poem by Carole Glasser -<br>Langille               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 5. OWL PELLET (3:26)<br>poem by Tim Bowling                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 6. LIVING IN THE PAST (4:45)<br>lyrics by Lloyd Tosoff and Ted<br>Tosoff |                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 7. DOWN TO THE WATER (6:21)<br>lyrics by Melissa Mansfield               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

The desire to challenge oneself (and the audience) is a key component of the DNA of a true artist. It is one that **AMANDA TOSOFF** vividly exemplifies on her compelling new release, **Words**.

Over the course of four earlier albums, the B.C.-raised Toronto-based pianist, composer and bandleader has established herself as one of the most exciting new talents on the Canadian jazz scene. Along with critical kudos and the respect of her peers, Tosoff has received such prestigious awards as the CBC Galaxie Rising Star Award at the 2007 Vancouver International Jazz Festival and the General Motors Grand Prix de Jazz at the 2009 Montréal Jazz Festival. She has performed with such internationally recognized artists as Ingrid Jensen, Emilie-Claire Barlow, Phil Dwyer, Christine Jensen, Brad Turner, and Kelly Jefferson; and her groups have opened for jazz legends Bobby Hutcherson, Renee Rosnes, Oliver Jones, and Brazilian singer Luciana Souza.

With her new album **Words**, Tosoff now takes an adventurous leap beyond the confines of conventional jazz. She has taken poems and lyrics that possess a personal resonance for her and framed them in original new compositions that utilize vocals for the first time. The result is an eclectic collection that incorporates elements of pop, art song, classical, folk and jazz.

The project may be difficult to categorize, but it is charmingly accessible. The fluent playing of Tosoff and her A-list ensemble matches the melodic eloquence of her compositions, while the poetic power of the lyrics and poems adapted by Amanda shines brightly here.

**Words** emerged quite spontaneously from, as Tosoff explains, “a random composition exercise. I wanted to write a melody to something with words. I began googling Canadian poets and Tim Bowling’s poem ‘Owl Pellet’ caught my attention. I wrote a melody to it and was really pleased with the result. This sparked the idea to start this new project.”

Further research brought material from noted Canadian poets Carole Glasser Langille and Laura Lush to the table, alongside William Wordsworth’s perennial favourite “Daffodils” and song lyrics from talented songsmiths (and members of Amanda’s family), Melissa Mansfield and Lloyd and Ted Tosoff.

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## AMANDA TOSOFF - *WORDS* – continued..

Tosoff notes that “in most cases I had an emotional response upon reading a lyric or a poem. I took those words and improvised some chords and a melody. And in many cases, those improvisations became the starting point for the tunes on the album. For some, there was a very obvious image or mood that came to mind that I’d then try to capture. I also found that the poems had a built-in rhythm that translated well to musical phrases. It was a very natural process and I feel that having someone else’s work as a starting point for my composition brought out totally different music than I’d have written otherwise.”

To bring the songs on **Words** to life, she recruited highly-regarded singer Felicity Williams (Hobson’s Choice, Bahamas), guitarist Alex Goodman (Montreux Jazz Festival Winner), bassist Jon Maharaj, and drummer Morgan Childs, while violinist Rebekah Wolkstein and cellist Amy Laing add atmospheric accompaniment to some of the tunes.

After an intense rehearsal period, the group then set up shop in noted Toronto studio Canterbury Music Company, with owner Jeremy Darby engineering with typical clarity. This was a familiar setting for Tosoff, as she’d recorded her third CD, 2010’s *Looking North*, there. “We recorded for 28 hours over two and half days. It was really hard work, but it was also really fun,” recalls Amanda.

The opening piece on **Words** fittingly shows the worth of words. It is an adaptation of Wordsworth’s “Daffodils,” a staple of English literature classes given fresh new life here. Tosoff explains that “I came across this poem as I was going through a difficult period in my life, and I just loved it. I actually wrote it out and hung it on my wall as a daily reminder. I’ve always wanted to write a melody to it.”

The catalyst for **Words**, “Owl Pellet” is a wonderfully evocative piece that musically conveys the sense of darkness, mystery and awe portrayed in the Tim Bowling poem. The poet himself is thrilled at Tosoff’s interpretation, commenting that “her haunting composition for ‘Owl Pellet’ adds layers of beauty and complexity to what can only be described as the mysterious spaces between the words. In that always intriguing and intimate dance between text and sound, she has created an eerie aural homage to the unfathomable being who hovers out there on the black branch between the stars.”

Tosoff didn’t need to look far from home to find song lyrics to fire up her muse. Her father Lloyd and uncle Ted Tosoff have long been active as songwriters in the Americana/country vein, and their lyrics in “Living In The Past” struck a chord with Amanda. As she explains in the album liner notes, “they are about people who take themselves and their pursuit of artistic endeavour too seriously, and in doing so become deluded with self-importance.” Lines like “there is no future in living in the past” hit home, and fluent acoustic bass and guitar solos punctuate the message.

Lyrics by Amanda’s sister Melissa Mansfield are featured on “Down To The Water,” a lovely and gently reflective strings-embellished number that does justice to the poignant subject matter, the passing of Melissa’s brother Mathew.

The clean, pure and unaffected vocal style of Felicity Williams proves the ideal delivery vehicle for these songs, while her wordless vocals on the sweetly melodic closing number, “Little Bird,” are equally convincing.

The release of **Words** will introduce Tosoff to a wider audience of music lovers, but she has long impressed jazz critics and aficionados with her earlier albums, all primarily featuring original compositions. Her first two records, 2006’s *Still Life* and 2008’s *Wait and See*, appeared on noted Vancouver label Cellar Live, while 2010’s *Looking North* was released on Amanda’s own imprint, Ocean’s Beyond Records. In 2013, she put out her first live recording, *Live at the Cellar*, recorded just before the Cellar Jazz club in Vancouver closed its doors.

Now Amanda Tosoff’s love affair with words is blooming, and she will continue to explore their integration with her eloquent musical compositions. Based on the major accomplishment that is **Words**, following that journey is sure to be a fascinating and worthwhile pursuit.