

# Portrait of Baroness Nica

Producer: Hank Hehmsoth

[music: "Nica's Deam" by Horace Silver]

[Dan Morgenstern] Let me say something about the Baroness. Nica. She was a wonderful lady.

[Thelonious Monk III] She was absolutely devoted to the great musicians that she knew. The testament to how important a human being she was to the jazz community is found in the fact that the greatest jazz musicians in the world wrote compositions for her.

[music - various artists]

[Thelonious Monk III] The Baroness was the granddaughter of Baron Rothschild, and she came to America in about 1955-1956, became very close friends with my father [Thelonious Monk] along with Art Blakey, Teddy Wilson, Gigi Gryce, and a number of a number of great musicians.

[Nica on radio] "Good evening everybody! this is Nica's Tempo, and tonight we are coming to direct from the Five Spot Cafe. And that beautiful music you hear is coming from Thelonious Monk and his quartet."

[Phil Schapp NYC radio personality] These shelves unfortunately tend to break the spines of the record so you can't easily read them. These are all Monk records and I'm going through every single one [Monk "Brilliant Corners"] "and that's the one with "Pannonica" on it?" Uh-huh! [Yes] This is really one of the great dedication pieces. This is a very major composition, specifically created to celebrate the individual, as opposed to "Hey, we just did a blues, adlibbed in the studio. Let's name it for our friend!" It's really one of the great, great jazz dedication pieces, as substantial as anything.

[music] At Blakey's Jazz Messengers "Weehawken Mad Pad" [Nica's home in Weehawken, NJ] Let's create a quiz about Nica! How many cats did Nica own? I think it was 306!!

[music]

Which legendary jazz musician died in Nica's apartment? Charlie Parker

What did Nica serve from a teapot? Scotch!

When she was a child who taught Nica magic tricks? Einstein!

[Dan Morgenstern] She had the Bentley, which has become famous. She was a hell of a driver. You know she had been an ambulance driver for the Free French in Algiers during World War II.

[music]

When we got the Mary Lou Williams collection at the Institute, she and Mary were great friends. There are letters that Nica wrote to Mary. And she had the most beautiful handwriting, But she also put little decorations in different colors on top of the first page of the letter and the same way, the envelopes. Mary was a saver. She saved it. That's another story. But anyway, Nica she was a dear person. And she cared so much for the people that she was really friendly with. Coleman Hawkins, for one. I mean that's one place where I was pretty close. So I knew how much she looked out for Hawk. And when he was on his decline there.... She was a terrific lady!

[Thelonious Monk on radio] Hi, everybody! ... very glad to be here today. And I would like to play a little tune I just composed not so long ago entitled "Pannonica". It was named after this beautiful lady here...

[music]

[FR] Merci Beaucoup, ladies and gentlemen [translated: thank you so much]

[Nica]: "Thank You, Thelonious Monk!"

[music]