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Live Jazz: 5 April Standouts, From Andrew Cyrille to Linda May Han Oh

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By Giovanni Russonello



On April 5, Patty Waters returned to a New York City stage for the first time since 2003. An Rong Xu for The New York Times

PATTY WATERS First Unitarian Congregational Society, April 5

When Patty Waters stepped up to the altar at this church in Downtown Brooklyn, it was the first time since 2003 that she had been on any kind of stage in New York City. Before that, she had scarcely been heard from since the late 1960s. Ms. Waters glided onto the New York avant-garde in 1965, at the age of 19, startling those around her with a sylphlike voice and a haunted air. Then, within a few years, she had drifted away. It made an odd kind of sense.

Ms. Waters didn't mention her absence at the concert, which was presented by [Blank Forms](#). She appeared with a team of seasoned free

improvisers: the pianist Burton Greene, who had played on her debut album, "[Patty Waters Sings](#)," from 1966; the bassist Mario Pavone; and the drummer Barry Altschul.

At 20, Ms. Waters already had a frosty, atrophied sound — light and diaphanous but also low and worn. It was the voice of curdled dreams, or of a spirit exiting the body. What was that going to be like now that she was 72?

As it happens, her style hasn't changed much, and its effect is intact. She stood onstage with her lips pulled back tightly in an excruciating wince, often repeating individual words in a breathy incantation. On "Lonely Woman," Ornette Coleman's famous lament, she undercut the melody's climax — a startled, bent-ore high note — just barely grazing it before letting her voice fall away. As ever, she was keeping you stupefied, stuck in place, by pointing at a thing that never took shape.

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