

ROCHESTER

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By Jeff Spevak

Mistress of romance lost and found

Welcome to Tessa Souter's set of romantic reality. Songs of "wishful thinking," as she calls them. And songs of inevitable failure and disappointment and dealing with sorrow and loneliness. Sunday's first set at Kilbourn Hall was weighted heavily toward the latter end. The romantic road takes many turns and, yes Souter admitted, she's gone off the road a few times.

But never off the rails. Her flight here was canceled, so Souter and the band took Amtrak from New York City to Rochester to make the gig. No luggage was lost. For this show being taped for later broadcast



TINA MACINTYRE-YEE/@TYEE23/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Tessa Souter performs at Kilbourn Hall during Day 3 of the jazz fest on Sunday.

by WXXI (channel 21), she wore an elegant black gown, bared at one shoulder, with her hair up in a sizable bun, a follicle crown.

Souter is a restless amalgamator. Writing lyrics for tunes she likes, be they classical or Wayne Shorter. Arranging others to her liking. Borrowing a line from a poem written by the son of her boyfriend and setting it to music. She is worldly, that's clear. She opened with Duke Ellington's "Caravan," coolly wailing with mystique, like a voice carried across the North African dunes.

She gave us songs of romance and lost romance such as "Obsession," "I Will Forget" and "You Won't Forget Me."

Dana Leong, on one song even accompanying himself by whistling, was playing a cello borrowed from Sullivan Violins down the street. He put it to good, haunting use, particularly on "Eleanor Rigby." You know, "all the lonely people," delivered alongside beautifully cascading percussion by Keita Ogawa and Adam Platt's stark piano. That was a perfect follow to "Lonely Woman."

Nearing show's close, the show stopping "Eleanor Rigby" led to a set of pop tunes, including U2's "Streets With No Name." And Sting's "Fragile," which she dedicated to Lew Soloff. The trumpet player, an Eastman School of Music grad, was here at the jazz fest last year when Souter played Montage Music Hall. Soloff died of an apparent heart attack earlier this year, and Souter sang these words for him:

*On and on the rain
will fall
like tears from the
stars
like tears from the
stars*