

Sheryl Mebane's Biography

Sheryl's life has been enriched by three main pursuits: music, writing and chemistry. Sheryl was born and grew up in North Carolina with two older sisters and parents who taught science in high school. An elementary school chorus introduced her to formal musical instruction. Sheryl also explored language through creative writing, and was first published in a statewide collection of student writing at eight years old. She melded her musical and literary interests in a high school project in which she composed and performed percussion music inspired by the works of James Baldwin. At the International Science and Engineering Fair, Sheryl presented a chemistry research project that systematically tested materials for drumheads. She gave the commencement address at her NC School of Science and Mathematics high school graduation after a draft of the speech won her the honor.

In the summers during her undergraduate career, Sheryl taught inner city Boston youth drumming and chemistry, interned in the Letters Department of *Newsweek*, and studied jembe drumming in West Africa, all funded by her Morehead Scholarship. During her four years at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC), she ran an elementary school creative writing competition for an honor society, composed and premiered pieces with the UNC Percussion Ensemble, and was section leader for the marching band's drumline. She graduated Phi Beta Kappa from UNC with a BS in Chemistry and Highest Honors for her Creative Writing thesis.

In 2003, Sheryl earned her doctorate in chemistry from the University of California at Berkeley (UCB). Her doctoral thesis includes molecular dynamics simulations of ultrafast solution dynamics of inorganic compounds as well as a research project in chemistry education that chronicles and analyzes the impact of heterogeneous classes on the achievement of African American chemistry students in an inner city school. Her research contributions have been published in the *Journal of the American Chemical Society* and *Science Education*.

Across the country, Sheryl has given research presentations at a variety of professional conferences, a charter school and a professional development program for teachers. As a guest lecturer, she taught UCB's education administration doctoral students and undergraduates who were interested in equity in science education. Currently, she is a Chancellor's Postdoctoral Fellow at UCB. Her environmental chemistry education, research and action project, the Chemistry Literacy Project, engages a network of diverse groups in creating and evaluating educational approaches, in formal and informal settings, that foster understanding in chemistry and inform environmentally just actions.

While conducting research, Sheryl continues to pursue writing. She completed the first Pearl Street Publishing Writing Fellowship. In 2003, Pearl Street released her debut jazz novel, *Lady Bird*. She also completed a Poetry for the People course with June Jordan, performed literary and musical events celebrating *Lady Bird* across the country, wrote a column for Pearl Street about her performances honoring Black History Month and finished her second novel.

As a working drummer and composer, Sheryl performs locally, tours and writes music with the trio Tangria Jazz Group. Tangria's first CD, *Songs from Lady Bird* (2003), is comprised of music for *Lady Bird* and includes three originals by Sheryl. Tangria's second CD, *Mebane's Eleven: Tunes for Two* (2006), includes two standards and seven of Sheryl's originals. *Mebane's Eleven* received airplay on about 100 radio stations, earned positive reviews and has been bought by fans worldwide. Sheryl also performs with and is recorded on the CD's of a variety of Bay Area bands with styles including jazz, funk and rock and with North Carolina jazz groups.