

Bassist's daughter Carolyn living on her own at WKU

When Charles Mingus died earlier this year at the age of 56, he left behind him a legacy in jazz circles as an innovative composer and bass player as well as an author and recording artist. Mingus had been sick for about a year and a half before his death in Mexico, sometimes appearing in concert in a wheelchair.

On a record album named after his death, songwriter Joni Mitchell said on the day after he died, 56 whales beached themselves on a coast of Mexico. Not knowing what to do with them, the people buried them. Fifty-six whales were cremated the same day as Mingus.

The jazzman's daughter, Carolyn Mingus of New York, is a Western Kentucky University freshman and is studying physical education.

"My father was a Buddhist, and they threw his ashes in the Ganges River to start the cycle of reincarnation. I can feel his presence in whatever I do," she said.

Ms. Mingus used to play the piano, but said she felt pressured to play.

She's concentrating now on running, disco dancing and putting her life back in order after her father's death.

"I wanted to get away from Manhattan, and I'm very much on my own. I'm learning slowly.

"He was the influence in



CHARLES MINGUS is shown in this 1975 photo with children Eric Mingus (left) and Carolyn Mingus. She presently is a Western Kentucky University freshman, and is studying physical education. Her father, a well known jazz bass player and composer, died earlier this year at the age of 56.

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my life. I went to Europe with him in 1977, and he started getting sick," she said.

She is 18 now, with a birthday coming up on Nov. 25. She said she sat in on a lot of her father's sessions when she was small.

"I didn't like jazz and I didn't pay attention to it back then. I never realized how good he was. You have it all your life and don't listen to it. I took it for granted."

Mingus wrote a song for her on his last album, "Me, Myself, an Eye," titled "Carolyn Keki Mingus."

"That's when I really started listening to him," she said. The song makes me aware of how I am. Every note in there is for a purpose because it's part of me." The song features relatively elaborate orchestration, one of Mingus' trademarks.

Her father was born in

Arizona in 1922, growing up around the blues and gospel. In the '40s, he became known as a "bebop" bass player, being one of the first to translate that idiom to the standup bass.

In the '50s, the Charles Mingus Jazz Workshop was considered one of the most prolific contributors to music of the era, including such members as reedmen John Handy and Jackie McLean and drummer Dannie Richmond.

During his career, he worked with Art Tatum, Louis Armstrong, Lionel Hampton, Duke Ellington, Charlie Parker and Red Norvo, to name a few.

Several heads turned in the music industry when word got out that Joni Mitchell and Mingus were involved in a project. The resulting "Mingus" album, never heard by the bassist, was given a five-star review in "downbeat" magazine, but was panned in "Rolling Stone."

Ms. Mingus said Mitchell played "Chair in the Sky" from the album at a memorial service for her father, after which "everyone stayed quiet" for a long time. Saxophonist Sonny Rollins also played—that left her with butterflies.

She said she likes it in Bowling Green, although nothing ever will take the place of Manhattan. She said she also noticed people were friendlier here.

Though she is out on her own, she's not trying to establish an immediate identity separate from the life she knew.

"I don't mind being known as Charles Mingus' daughter. I'm proud of him. I always want to be known as part of him," she said.

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