

Contrapuntal for Shirley Horn

--For the 48th ALX Jazz Fest, Saturday, June 13, 2026

The piano, her mother said
came first, then

the slow-burn
voice like a silken beam—

sunshine in the afternoon
and shadow

swaying beneath soft brass
pedals

a tumble of languorous keys
two subtle soliloquys

suddenly in rapture, verve
before birthing blue flame

sweet coils of smoke
stretching dreamily

toward heaven
now one

silver, ageless

plume

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