

## BRIDGES LINER NOTES

Anne and I travel a LOT and we especially love road trips, perhaps because we spend so much time in *planes*! Over the years, she's discovered that I love tunnels and bridges and have since I was a kid. There's something magical about leaving one place by crossing under or over something and arriving someplace new. While Freudian scholars will quickly point to a tunnel as being symbolic of birth, or of returning to the womb, almost everyone agrees in the universal symbolism of a bridge: a crossing to somewhere new, a reaching out to someone or something, a step of a journey large or small.

We've crossed numerous bridges since last I sat down to write liner notes for our latest recording. Anne continues to cross into new territory as she explores her voice styling and gains greater confidence in her improvisational prowess, while I encounter bridges that lead me to new compositions and lyrics. Perhaps the most significant bridge we've crossed is the passing—across the ultimate bridge—of Jack Miller, our dear friend and engineer of the last dozen or more of our projects, and having to cope not only with his loss but with searching out the right person to capture the next stages of our musical journey together. We went back to Jim McNeish, an old friend and director of the music school at which we once taught. While he did a great job recording our first two projects (including our best seller: *My Funny Valentine*) I think the sound he is creating now is even better.

We thought we'd be cheeky and begin the recording with **Bye Bye Blues**, a hit from 1925 that first appeared on record by co-composer Fred Hamm's Orchestra, an outfit so obscure that all of my sources listed the publishing date as 1930—the year several important recordings of it were made—and so we have as well. Apologies to the Hamm family. From this whisper of a start, the song rocketed to popularity and has been covered by everyone from Bing Crosby to Peggy Lee, the Spotnicks to Bert Kaempfert (in 1966 as a top 100 single). It's a great romp of a tune and we loved racing through it!

Onto to Anne's first "Red Hot Mama" tune—if her university professors could hear her now—with the 1919 Eddie Green Classic, **A Good Man Is Hard to Find**. Anne's version owes a great deal more to classic belter Pat Yankee's version than it does to the original recording of the song as warbled by Marion Harris in the year of its composition. Another vastly covered ditty, this plaint of male quality becomes a paean to revenge and enjoyed versions by Bessie Smith, Brenda Lee, Helen Humes and, incredibly, Wingy Manone, Fats Waller and Frank Sinatra!!

**The Lover's Waltz** has rapidly become one of our most requested pieces. Written by fiddle player Jay Ungar (of *Ashoken Farewell* fame) and his wife, pianist Molly Mason, the song was introduced to us by Melanie Foss, in Muscatine, IA, where I direct a ragtime/early jazz festival every January. On the sheet music she gave us, Jay Ungar tells the story of the piece:

"Molly and I wrote this tune in 1985, when we were first together. It was kind of a spontaneous composition—where I started playing melody and she played chords, and both the chords and melody evolved as we played it. We'd play it at home together. But it was too personal to play for other people—I felt the same way about *Ashoken Farewell* at first. You know, you're not sure if people will even like it. Eventually, we played it at a late night waltz session at Ashoken. It seemed the right moment for the tune to emerge."

It took this piece 7 years to cross the bridge into being published as the copyright date is 1992! I found Jay's words resonating with me as I sometimes feel that the music Anne and I create is very private. It takes real bravery to share one's music with others and Anne and I feel so blessed to be crossing bridges together.

Ours is the debut recording of **Take Away My Heart**. I know this because I wrote the lyrics to a melody composed by our good friend, French stride pianist Louis Mazetier. He played it for me last October in CT at our annual jazz event, Jeff and Joel's House Party. I was taken by the flow of the piece and the seamless chord structure. He captured the swinging melancholia one can only find in the best of the Waller ballads of 80 years ago. I mentioned that the tune seemed to ask for lyrics and he gave me his blessing to write some. Honoring jazz tradition, I changed his title for the instrumental, *Take It Away*, to the more poignant listed title for the song version.

**Undecided** was written by Charlie Shavers—then only 19!!—and debuted with a version by John Kirby and the Onyx Club Boys. A notable recording saw Ella Fitzgerald singing it with the Chick Webb Orchestra in 1939, but the big hit went to The Ames Brothers with Les Brown's outfit in 1951. Since then it is included in virtually every swing band's repertoire. Perhaps the most surprising appearance of the song is in the 2015 role-playing video game, *Fallout 4*!

Simultaneous with Anne's exploration of "shout" or "hot" tunes is her enjoyment of singing a pretty tune prettily. Here, she turned the large recording studio an intimate jazz club and I was able to watch her sing just for me as I accompanied her on **(I Love You) For Sentimental Reasons**. Of course, the great Nat Cole had the big hit in 1946; his version reached the Billboard Best Seller chart, lasted on it for 12 weeks and peaked at number one. A song that appeals to many styles and both genders, this pop hit has been covered by Dean Martin, Linda Ronstadt, Ella (is there ANYTHING she didn't sing?), Rod Stewart, Sam Cooke and even had two versions, a funk one in 1969 and a disco one in 1976 by James Brown! Here, we keep it simple and let the pureness of the melody, the sentiment and Anne's voice take front seat.

Our roots are in ragtime and so we depart from the sublime to the syncopated with a rollicking take on Lampe's cakewalk hit from 1900, **Creole Belles**. The earliest recording was by John Philip Sousa's band in 1902. 115 years later, this rag is still vibrant and was loads of fun to record. There is a whole set of lyrics to each section, but I grew up hearing Vince Saunders of The South Frisco Jazz Band sing only the chorus and I thought that was a perfect interlude. Note that on the final chorus, I take over the melody so Anne can soar above, and soar she does!

Only recently did I realize that the American songwriting team of Lerner and Loewe had so many hits with shows concerning Anne's and my adopted homeland, the U.K. First up was *Brigadoon* in 1947, followed by their biggest hit, *My Fair Lady* in 1956 and culminating with *Camelot* in 1960. We began performing *Brigadoon's* big hit, **Almost Like Being in Love**, as an instrumental but Anne soon realized that the words were wonderful to sing and the melody fit her to a T. This song is always a highlight of any of our sets together.

**A Bientôt** is a tune penned by Jazz pianist Dr. Billy Taylor. Our good friend George Huxley introduced it to me and, several years after he and I recorded it, I started to wonder if Anne would enjoy playing it. It is a lovely melody transformed with the rich tone and phrasing of my amazing wife. One of my two favorite tracks on the recording.

While the history of our next tune, **Avalon**, from 1920, has been recounted numbers times it is such a great story that it needs to be repeated here. Vincent Rose and Buddy DeSylva had a tune they were hoping Al Jolson might sing. Sing it, he did, but only after they included him as co-composer. Seems stars could get away with that, and not just way back then: for example, many sources suggest Duke Ellington pulled rank on several tunes exclusively written by Billy Strayhorn. In the case of Avalon, the opening phrase of the melody, though in a different mode, resembled an aria from Puccini's opera *Tosca* closely enough that the composer's publishers sued Jolson, Rose and DeSylva in 1921. They were awarded \$25,000 and all subsequent royalties into perpetuity. Insisting on claiming co-authorship was one of Jolson's rare mistakes. As a nod to the classical antecedent of the tune, we have a bit of fun "fugue-ing" it up before the final hot chorus.

We move on to another fantastic rarity, a tune with the curious title **(I've Got the Blues) But I'm Just Too Mean to Cry**. The editors of the sheet music might have gotten their parentheses mixed up as, while the earlier track on our recording can stand alone as *For Sentimental Reasons*, in this case, without the parenthesized portion, the title seems odd...At any rate, Anne belts it out in a fashion that would make original artist Sophie Tucker proud. Anne rewrites one lyric as she is small in stature—but not in volume!!— so the line "some sweet papa bouncing on my knee" becomes "some sweet papa bounce ME on his knee." Such "size-ist" humor worked for Ms. Tucker but not for *mon petit damsel*. The lyricist was Mitchell Parish, who, 8 years later, would go on to write lyrics for the immortal *Stardust!* Special thanks to Dr. Craig Wright for introducing me to this tune years ago and pianist Mark Allan Jones for contributing hipper chords to the tune than were in the original.

If the previous track has the weirdest title, this next track has the strangest origins. Once again, we received the music from our Melanie in Muscatine, who draws her sources from the rich folk music world of the hammer-dulcimer, an instrument that she and her husband Chris play (and build). On the sheet, the source for **The Dark Island** was listed as "*The Clutha: Scots Ballads, Songs and Dance Tunes*." When we played it, it had an ancient sound and feel to it and I assumed it was a 16th or 17th century melody. I checked all sources I could find in search of a tune from such an era and came up empty-handed. Turns out I was 4 centuries off! While compositional rights to this haunting piece seem to be in dispute, it is generally acknowledged that the tune itself was penned by an accordionist called Iain MacLachlan, or at least he is responsible for the version used in the 1963 BBC thriller series called *The Dark Island*. Many people on the web claim to have heard this melody as early as the late 1940's so we may never know its true origin. As a cultural aside, Anne and I performed this tune twice in Southern Scotland to huge acclaim. Once we entered England, our performance of it was met with polite golf claps. Definitely a regional hit! However, wherever we are, when we perform this melody, invariably someone approaches us to say they were brought to tears. It does stick with one!

**Crazy Rhythm** (1928) remains a favorite for traditional and swing jazz bands and also has been covered by everything from mainstream jazz ensembles to hillbilly bebop (!?!). This Tin Pan Alley ditty has lent its name to shows, albums, books, music stores and bars. I've not read, seen or been to all of these yet, but I'm working on it! We start with some tight harmony and then have fun trading leads on this infectious tune. Dance to this one in your own crazy way!

No-one in modern times can perform or hear **Dream a Little Dream of Me** without thinking of the seminal 1968 version by Mama Cass with the Mamas and the Papas. That recording was a world-wide hit and breathed new life into a 37-year old standard created by ubiquitous lyricist

Gus Kahn, and the obscure melody-writing team of Fabian Andre and Wilbur Schwandt. Recent versions by Barry Manilow and Robbie Williams have kept the song in people's minds and ears. Ours sets out to do nothing radical; it is a simple, beautiful melody with sweet lyrics and we perform it with those in mind.

The Gershwins had a huge hit with **S'Wonderful** and the song just keeps on going! It was introduced in the show *Funny Face* by Adele Astaire and Allen Kearns. It seems every decade sees someone resurrect this tune with huge success. Perhaps this will be OUR decade!!! What I especially love about this classic is its versatility; it is a great tune at any tempo. Anne and I recorded it twice during the session and decided on the more upbeat one. In live shows, I sometimes kick the tempo WAY up and Anne manages to get all those words out and still swing!!

Our penultimate selection is not John Denver's **Annie's Song** but one written by me for my beloved. I am always writing complex pieces for her to master and she asked me to write her "something simple" for a change. While the song is indeed simple, the emotion behind it is complex and deep; I'll never fully be able to explore how much I love Anne Barnhart. She blesses me every day with her talent, patience, outlook, strength and passion. I am truly blessed.

We finish up with the timeless classic from *No, No Nanette*: **I Want to be Happy**. When I introduce this song on stage I tell the audience if they'd like to choose another dwarf (Sleepy, Bashful, etc.) they can feel free to do so. Not at all PC, but it always gets a laugh. It DID backfire recently when I fell victim to a spoonerism and referred to "Dumpy" and "Gropey" in my list of possible alternatives. I think this concept is following me around, as my Dad sent me a card for my 50th renaming the dwarves, as they turned 50, into Squinty, Itchy, Gassy, Saggy, Cranky, Gimpy and Snoozy! Better than the ultimate alternative, I guess...

So there you have it: Anne and I will continue to cross as many bridges as we can, and endeavor not to burn any!...and we hope our crossings will lead to an encounter with you, either in person or wherever you are listening to our music. Thanks for listening!