

Mezzo-Soprano **Stephanie Blythe** has captivated audiences at the greatest opera houses, symphony and recital halls of the world. At the Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Seattle Opera, the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, the Opera National de Paris and other companies, Ms. Blythe is known for her diverse repertoire, which includes Handel, Verdi and Wagner. In **As Long As There Are Songs**, Stephanie Blythe reveals another side of her multi-faceted career. Through this intimate recording, Ms. Blythe celebrates the glorious popular music of the 30s, 40s, 50s and 60s — the songs that defined the American musical aesthetic before the advent of rock n' roll. Ms. Blythe and her collaborative partner, Craig Terry, have been in high demand throughout the US for this program and for her evening celebrating the musical legacy of an American icon, the legendary Kate Smith.

www.opus3artists.com/artists/stephanie-blythe

A native of Tullahoma, Tennessee, pianist **Craig Terry** enjoys an international career performing with some of the world's leading singers and instrumentalists. Currently Mr. Terry is in his eighth season as Assistant Conductor, and has recently been named Music Director of the Ryan Opera Center at Lyric Opera of Chicago. Previously, he served as Assistant Conductor at the Metropolitan Opera after joining its Lindemann Young Artist Development Program. In addition to his work with Stephanie Blythe, Mr. Terry has performed with such esteemed vocalists Christine Brewer, Nicole Cabell, Giuseppe Filianoti, Joseph Kaiser, Danielle De Niese, Patricia Racette, Hugh Russell, and Garrett Sorenson. He has collaborated as a chamber musician with members of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, the Lyric Opera of Chicago Orchestra, the Gewandhaus Orchestra, the Berlin Philharmonic, the Vienna Philharmonic, and the Pro Arte String Quartet. Mr. Terry made his Carnegie Hall debut in 2000 and has also performed at Avery Fisher Hall, Alice Tully Hall, the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

CREDITS

Recording produced by Meyer Sound Laboratories Inc.
Executive producer: Evans Mirageas
Recording consultant: John Meyer
Recordings engineers: John Pellowe and Miles Rogers
Music Editor: Ian Watson

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Philip Blackburn, director, design
Chris Campbell, operations manager
Steve McPherson, publicist www.innova.mu

A Note from John Meyer —

This bold and dynamic performance was recorded live on December 16, 2013, at Meyer Sound's Pearson Theatre in Berkeley, CA, using a new recording technique developed by John Meyer.

Impressed by the acoustics of this unique space during her May 2012 benefit performance for Cal Performances, Stephanie Blythe chose to record her first album of popular songs here. John Meyer's recording technique enables listeners to experience Blythe and accompanist Craig Terry at their most natural-sounding, as if they were in the session with the artists themselves.

Meyer's technique takes full advantage of the low distortion and high dynamic range of today's recording and audio technologies. This contrasts with conventions of high compression and limited bandwidth first established in the 1950s, designed to maximize the broadcast power from AM radio stations; techniques that are still in use today. To add to the authenticity of this recording, no post-process filtering, compression or electronic spatial enhancements were used during the recording or mastering processes.

As a result, many listeners will be surprised by what they hear since the artists' true dynamic range, articulation, ensemble and intonation are faithfully reproduced as they would be experienced by a live audience in an intimate, acoustic space. Throughout each song the dynamics build in volume and intensity just as the artist performed them.

To accomplish this quality of recording, the Pearson Theatre utilized a Meyer Sound Constellation acoustic system — technology that enables the acoustical properties of a room to be altered to suit the nature of any given performance. Constellation provided the appropriate reverberation and early reflections for Blythe's performance. Recording microphones chosen for their quality and accuracy were placed in the far field to capture a delicate blend of direct and reverberant energy. Carefully specified distances created spatial enhancement of the voice and piano. Ultimately it is the pure joy inherent in Blythe and Terry's performance that brings this recording to life.



From Stephanie Blythe —

It all began with dinner. I met the brilliant couple, John and Helen Meyer, at a fundraising dinner held at Meyer Sound Laboratories in Berkeley, CA, following a concert given by Craig Terry and myself to raise funds for Cal Performances. The concert was held in their Pearson Theater. When I first saw the space, I was shocked; I am used to singing in large spaces, and this was petite, to say the least. What I was to discover was that this glorious space could create any acoustic we could possibly desire, allowing us to play with the most intimate or grand of musical textures — granting us a clarity of sound and freedom that is not always guaranteed in the largest concert halls.

Sitting with John and Helen later that night over our meal, I asked a million questions. How was this exquisite sound made possible? How can this be utilized in the concert theater?

Might it be used for recording? My biggest issue with recording my own voice was that when I listened to playbacks, it never really sounded like me — I was interested in a sound that was honest, generous and real. After talking with John, I just mentioned casually that if Meyer Sound was interested in doing any experiments with recording, I was their gal. That was the beginning — Helen Meyer did her magic — she asked all the right questions, got all the right people together, and Craig Terry and I were given an opportunity of which we had only

dreamed: to record these wonderful songs in a loving, supportive, imaginative place with amazing, talented, innovative people.

There are so many folks that helped to make this all possible: the brilliant team at Meyer Sound working with the amazing John Pellowe, the always incisive, wonderful Evans Mirageas, John and Helen always checking in, making sure that everything was all right, taking care of our every need, right down to beautifully catered meals before every session. It was four days of unadulterated bliss. And most importantly, we were all **THRILLED** by the results. We wanted a recorded sound that makes the listener feel like they are right there in the room with us, and that, my dears, is what we got!

How can I begin to thank Craig Terry? Perhaps by just saying that our collaborations make my heart soar, my brain shout with joy, and my voice feel as if it can say absolutely anything — and that you always play the perfect question for me to answer, and play the perfect answer to my question.

Thank you, darling Caroline — this is as much your accomplishment as it is mine.

Lastly, I would like to dedicate this recording to my fabulous husband, David Smith-Larsen. You make it all worthwhile, lover!

The first half of what has been dubbed “The American Century” witnessed an outpouring of popular song unrivaled by any other country on earth. During those rich years, music and lyrics of the highest craftsmanship flowed from the imaginations of our nation’s greatest popular songwriters. The most enduring of these standards from the golden years of Tin Pan Alley, musical theater, and film comprise the canon now commonly known as the “Great American Songbook.” These were songs intended for, or adopted by the most accomplished singers of the twentieth century, like Bing Crosby, Ethyl Mer- man, Judy Garland, Kate Smith, and Frank Sinatra.

Continuing this lineage of artists in our own generation is Stephanie Blythe, whose vocal beauty and communicative powers combine to express a nation’s hopes, dreams, loves, and values. On televi- sion and stages throughout our country she has breathed new life into these works in interpretations that still possess the ability to touch contemporary audiences. Her deep commitment and authority in presenting this repertoire have made Stephanie Blythe the reigning Queen of American Song in our time. Her creative partnership with the remarkable pianist Craig Terry in this collection marks a dynamic collaboration that celebrates our wealth of American song classics.

The sense of irreplaceable optimism that has long typified the indomitable spirit of the American character shines through in **Look For The Silver Lining**, the hit of the 1919 musical *Sally*, with songs by Jerome Kern and Bud DeSylva, and highlighting the great *Ziegfeld Follies* star Marilyn Miller. The broadly lyrical gestures of the melody resonate with Kern’s early training in operetta composition, while DeSylva’s text reassures that life’s clouds will vanish with a sunny disposition.

Even a calamity as grave as the Great Depression proved incapable of crushing this hopeful spirit, which was shored up during those dark years by upbeat songs like Harry Barris, Ted Koehler and Billy Moll’s **Wrap Your Troubles in Dreams**. First popularized in 1931 by the new crooning sensation Bing Crosby, its swinging dance-like melody and confident dismissal of cares offered a welcome diversion from the economic troubles of the day.

The tradition of the Broadway revue that had been established in the early twentieth century by Florenz Ziegfeld’s lavish *Follies* revues continued in George White’s *Scandals*, which ran between 1919 and 1939. *The Scandals of 1931*, scored by the songwriting team of DeSylva, Brown and Henderson, and starring Rudy Vallee, Ethel Merman, Ray Bolger, and Alice Faye, ran for 202 performances. Its most enduring number, *The Thrill Is Gone*, expresses the bitter disillusionment of a faded love. While relatively rare in American popular song, the minor mode appeared here and several other times during the Depression years, as reality surged to the surface amid the era’s cheerily escapist songs.

Irving Berlin, America’s most prolific genius of both music and words, also turned to the minor mode the following year in the plaintive love ballad, **How Deep Is The Ocean?** It is a verseless song with lyrics that cut directly to the heart with nothing more than a series of disarmingly straightforward reflective questions. The melody lies almost entirely within an octave and moves pensively in small intervals, creating the melancholic feeling of one desperately seeking words worthy of expressing a profound love.

Berlin had explored the depth of romantic commitment in an equally original way several years earlier. Following a period of mourning for the loss of his first wife in 1913, he had begun to court Ellin Mackay, a member of a prominent Catholic socialite family. In defiance of the wishes of Ellin’s father, who objected to the composer’s Jewish immigrant heritage, the couple eventually eloped in 1926. Although Ellin suffered disinheritance as a result, she – and the American people – received, in honor of their wedding, the gift of one of the most cherished of all his songs, *Always*. The remarkably economical chorus is unified by a simple rising five-note motive and by the all-important word that closes nearly every phrase – “always.”

“Bei Mir Bistu Shein” (“To Me You are Beautiful”), from a short-lived 1932 Yiddish musical comedy by Shalom Secunda and Jacob Jacobs attracted the attention of lyricist Sammy Cahn after hearing it presented by African-American performers (in Yiddish!) at the Apollo Theater in Harlem in 1937. Following purchase of the copyright for a meager sum, Cahn and creative partner, composer Saul Chaplin transformed the song into a syncopated swing number with the Germanicized title **Bei Mir Bist Du Schön**. The novelty of an ethnically flavored melody in the minor mode, fused with clever rhyme-play in syncopated swing rhythms proved irresistible to the young American public. The November 1937 recording by the Andrews Sisters propelled the unknown group to instant stardom, along with the first gold record ever awarded to a female vocal ensemble. The success of Chaplin and Cahn continued into the next year with another hit, the sweetly pleading **Please Be Kind**.

Popular song became a powerful vehicle for international solidarity during World War II. First popularized in England by Vera Lynn, and in America by the beloved radio star Kate Smith, the nostalgic **White Cliffs Of Dover** by Englishmen Walter Kent and Nat Burton kept patriotic morale strong on both sides of the Atlantic in 1942. Later that year, Harry Warren, the composer of *42nd Street* and other Depression Era film scores, teamed with Mack Gordon to reveal a surprisingly soulful side of his musical persona with the similarly wistful swing ballad, **Serenade In Blue**. Its melancholy rising and chromatically weeping lines were perfectly tailored for the expressive trombone style of bandleader Glenn Miller, whose rendition of the song was immortalized in the 1942 Hollywood film, “Orchestra Wives.”

More consistently at home with the blues idiom was Harold Arlen. The son of a Jewish cantor, Harold had grown up in a two-family house in Buffalo that they shared with an African-American family, sowing the seeds of a lifelong attraction to the music of that culture. His 1943 collaboration with lyricist Johnny Mercer on the musical *St. Louis Woman*, starring Lena Horne and Pearl Bailey, featured **Any Place I Hang My Hat Is Home**. Characteristic of many of Arlen’s melodies, the confine- ment of the range of the melody’s A section to no more than three notes is reminiscent of early blues, imparting a complacently cool swagger to the lyrics. Arlen’s absorption of African-American musical language was never far away, even in songs that were intended for white stars. A lonely bar near closing time and a solitary customer bending a bartender’s ear while drowning his sorrows over a lost love sets up Johnny Mercer’s evocative scenario for one of Arlen’s most masterful songs, **One For My Baby**. An- other single narrowly-ranged phrase broods repeatedly, broken only by the weary toast that concludes each A section, “make it one for my baby, and one more for the road.” Incapable of being confined to the conventional 32 bars of melody, Arlen allowed the emotional overflow of Mercer’s lyrics to spill over into an unrestrained 48 bars. Stephanie Blythe and Craig Terry reveal the affinity between these two Arlen road songs by interweaving the verses into their own unique composite arrangement.

Arlen later teamed with Ira Gershwin on the score for the 1954 Hollywood remake of “A Star is Born,” which marked a triumphal comeback for Judy Garland. Wee hours in a bar room were again the backdrop, this time for a late-night rehearsal of the heartbreaking torch song **The Man That Got Away**. Nominated for Best Original Song in 1955, it would become, along with many Arlen songs, closely identified with Judy Garland.

The 1945 all-star film extravaganza “Ziegfeld Follies” revolved around the premise of the late Flo- renz Ziegfeld’s fantastical posthumous vision of reviving his famous *Follies*, employing MGM’s current top stars. One of these, Lena Horne, was featured in a production number set in a West-Indies cabaret. **Love**, the sultry song composed for her by Hugh Martin and Ralph Blane, simmers with an eruptive exoticism beneath the surface as the lyrics recount the many forms that love might take.

The power of sincerely wished dreams was never more eloquently expressed than in what may be the most iconic of all American animated film images – that of Jimmy Cricket, voiced by the falsetto crooner Cliff Edwards, singing **When You Wish Upon A Star** in Walt Disney’s *Pinocchio*. After win- ning the Academy Award for Best Original Song in 1940 with composer partner Leigh Harline, lyr- icist Ned Washington went on to be nominated for nine additional Academy Awards over the next 22 years. So memorable was the song’s message, that it was adopted as the theme song of Disney’s weekly television program, where it continued to cast its magic over new generations of young viewers.

Although the bulk of songs from the Great American Songbook span from the 1920s to the 1950s, one later masterpiece might be considered the worthy capstone of that glorious canon. **This Is All I Ask**, by one of the most influential arranger-songwriters of the mid-twentieth century, Gordon Jenkins, was composed for *September of My Years*, Frank Sinatra’s 1965 album of songs on the theme of aging. A single brief verse musing over the joy of maturity sets up the generously lyrical chorus, a euphoric litany of appeals to the providers of life’s simplest pleasures. A rapturous climax fittingly crowns the song – and this anthology by Stephanie Blythe and Craig Terry – with the ecstatic plea to “let the music play as long as there’s a song to sing”!