

Our most recent *Ivory & Gold* releases have been a bit serious, reflecting how we are growing as a group. We thought it important to keep in touch with the fun we have performing together and working on new projects. The title of our adventure this time reflects that we spend between 40-42 weeks of the year on the road, more often than not in each others company. And, YES, the scenario you see on the cover represents how we sometimes feel trying to cram what would fit comfortably in a minivan or SUV into a compact car (so rented as to maximize the take-home money factor). It is always a bit of a challenge and we are very happy Danny is so flexible and can sit for three hours with his knees muffling his ability to hear. These times on the road give us a chance to come up with fresh ideas, some of which you will hear on this new CD.

We begin with the immortal *I'm Gonna Sit Right Down and Write Myself a Letter*. This ditty is often wrongly attributed to Fats Waller as his was the first and best recorded rendering. However, legend suggests that although he received no credit, Fats did have a quiet hand in the song's improvement. As always, upon arriving in the RCA studios, Fats and his Rhythm were given songs by the A&R (Artists and Repertoire) man. They usually had no say in what they were recording, a circumstance arising in their often having to slog through musical wastelands in search of treasure. In the case of the tune under discussion, Fats played through it and said "uh, uh...no way! The boys and I cannot do anything with this piece of drivel." Once reminded of his agreed upon terms, Fats saw he had no choice and so dismissed the band for a ten minute break, whereupon he rewrote the ending to the tune, spruced it up to his liking, recorded it in one take and promptly forgot about it. It would become the most popular recorded hit of his career and would forever be associated with him.

Our next selection hails from across the pond. Written by English clarinetist Acker Bilk—who at the time of this writing is still performing in his eighties in the UK—*Stranger on the Shore* became his biggest hit and a number one hit in the UK. In the US, Andy Williams had a strong hit with the vocal version, of which we have mercifully spared you this time around. Anne's gorgeous flute tone is well represented in this reverent essaying of a timeless classic. With some of the places we travel, we do often feel like strangers on a new shore.

Staying with the seaside theme, let's go down to the islands with the joyous *Isle of Capri*. Notice the seamless way that Danny switches between Latin and swing feels. We couldn't decide how to do this one and so did it both ways! In the UK this was a hit for bandleader Lew Stone, while more familiar versions were released by everyone from Guy Lombardo to Xavier Cugat and their respective orchestras. The hottest version was by one-armed trumpeter Wingy Manone.

We travel from the far away tropical climes to a resort much closer to Anne's and my home. I used to sing *Old Cape Cod* during my barroom days in the 1980-90's and once I started performing in festival bands in earnest lost track of this charming nostalgic piece. It has more meaning to a New Englander, I guess. Of course, it had huge significance for Patti Page, whose premier version of the song was an immense hit. Anne plays the counter-melody I concocted for her behind the vocal with warmth that will bring back those seaside days of yore. The lyrics also fit nicely with our theme: "winding roads that seem to beckon you..."

We've indulged in the ocean air long enough, so it's off to the Midwest for some good old stompin' Ragtime with Julia Niebergall's *Hoosier Rag*. A "Hoosier" is someone who comes from Indiana. I've asked many people why, including some Indianans, and nobody seems to know the reason. I imagine it must be a good thing or they'd stop calling each other by that strange soubriquet. The piece is bucolic and romps along with folksy humor. Danny's ragtime band drums steer us along to a riotous finish.

I first encountered *Lullaby of the Leaves* when I heard a recording done by Benny Goodman and his sextet in the 1950's. How surprised I was to find that the song had been written over 20 years prior to Goodman's swinging version. The chord progression is very smooth for that time, with extended harmonies built into the melody. We chose a gentle shuffle rhythm to bring out the movement of the tune.

All God's Children Got Rhythm has such a perfect chord sequence and swinging melody that for a long time I mistakenly gave James P. Johnson credit for its creation. Turns out he had nothing to do with its inception, but shared other stride pianists' passion in playing it. The song received its debut in a show number from the 1937 Marx Brothers film "A Day at the Races." In this production piece, Ivy Anderson sings the tune; while Harpo and members of the shanty town, which provides the setting, cavort and jive, dance madly around the set. While it is a heavy-handed caricature of the black population (so much so that before the film was released on video, television stations airing the film edited the sequence out), Ms. Anderson's singing - she sang on Seminal Recordings with Duke Ellington and his Orchestra - and the amazing feats of the dancers hold sway to make one happy it has been reinstated. Here Anne takes a much deserved break and Danny and I go to town. We were both laughing at the end of this roller-coaster ride. Hang on!

Our friend Nan Bostick wrote the elegiac *That Missing You Rag* in honor of four friends who were special to her in the ragtime world who passed away in quick succession (including two performers from whom I learned quite a bit and also miss dearly: Bob Darch and Jan Hamilton Douglas). Nan's piece has all of the ragtime syncopation one could desire, but tempered with reflective melodies, minor tonalities and much pathos. She scored it for solo piano so we had an interesting challenge devising ways to split the melodies between flute and piano and creating drum accompaniment to enhance the piece. We are very pleased with the results and it remains one of our favorite pieces to perform. It meets with universal acclaim. Many thanks, Nan, for creating a work of such beauty.

Now we embark on a piece that James P. Johnson did write. *Old Fashioned Love* has long been a favorite. I have recorded it almost a dozen times in different configurations and with different feels. We chose a hard driving, bluesy shuffle for a new approach to this perennial tune. Johnson included it in his show "Running Wild", which opened in October 1923, had an all-black cast and enjoyed 213 performances. Quite an achievement in an era where all-black casts were rare, although stars and script writers F.E. Miller and Aubrey Lyles had also contributed the book and their star power to "Sissle and Blake's Shuffle Along", a show from 1921 that ran for 504 performances!

We use what Danny calls a "skeletal rumba" to contribute to the sultriness of Cole Porter's rhetorical classic *What is This Thing Called Love?*, a tune from the show "Wake Up and Dream" which sounds far ahead of its composition date of 1930. Anne brings a smoky sound to her playing and throws us off by starting with an improvisation rather than a statement of the melody. When we do this one live, the dance floor fills up so bring your dancing shoes next time you come to hear us!

Sidney Bechet was one of the hottest (and most hot-headed) New Orleans musicians and like so many jazz performers had a dichotomous aspect: he played scorching solos, but he wrote sweet tunes. We chose one of his prettiest, the seldom heard *As-Tu Le Cafard?*, for inclusion in our latest musical travelogue. Bechet spent a great deal of time in Europe, specifically Paris, and this is a tune from the segment of his career. As with so many of Bechet's pieces (reference *Passport to Paradise* on our Ivory & Gold CD of the same name) this ballad flirts between major and minor tonalities throughout, creating a mysteriously melancholy aura. Interestingly, there are two interpretations of the title. The literal translation is, "You have the cockroach." Perhaps "roach" refers to smoking marijuana, which would support the mystic quality of the tune and harmonies. A more poetic title, utilizing the second meaning of "cafard," is, "Are you feeling blue?" Focus on either interpretation as you bask in our unabashedly romantic rendering.

Tunesmith Percy Wenrich (hits included: *When You Wore a Tulip* and *Put on Your Old Grey Bonnet*) wrote a fair number of fun, simple rags. One of his biggest hits was a rag with tongue-twisting words: *The Red Rose Rag*. Shakespeare it is not, but the nonsensical words fit perfectly with the lilting, syncopated melodies. When we perform this one, Anne gets revenge by making me reprise the chorus as fast as possible. Note the surprise ending, which we have tried goading and begging Danny to do onstage, but he claims the muse has left him. At least it is preserved for eternity on this recording.

From the ludicrous to the lofty, we launch into Rodgers and Hammerstein's sweeping *I Have Dreamed* from "The King and I", a show that included a gigantic share of the song-writing teams most memorable (and musical) hits. The genius Rodgers virtually redefined his composing style when he moved from his previous partnership with Lorenz Hart (a fruitful one lasting from 1919 until 1943 upon Hart's death), into his even more commercially successful (and artistically less volatile) pairing with lyricist and libretto writer Oscar Hammerstein, II. Rodgers tunes had a witty urbanity when he matched them with Hart's genius lyrics - actually dependable Rodgers would write the tune first most often to try and get flighty, moody Hart to focus on working - so perhaps his sophisticated melodies were in anticipation of the wordplay in store for them. Once he joined forces with Hammerstein, Rodgers' pieces developed a simultaneously more serious and straightforward mien. A complicated, ingenious structure often lurked under the surface simplicity. In *I Have Dreamed*, Rodgers presents the same 4 measure phrase three times (as the start of an 8 measure phrase), with each repetition rising up a key (from Eb to F to G). The second half of the song turns into an impassioned aria; the rhythm becomes smoother, the phrases less choppy and we have the optimistic outcome of love achieved. We chose to highlight the varied feels of this tune by playing it as both a ballad and a swing number. Be careful if you dance to this one as you'll have to switch gears midway!!

We move now to Anne's big ballad feature (each of our releases includes at least one tune to highlight the unprecedented sonority and richness of her tone). Here, we have chosen a tune written for one Knight of the Realm by another. *Basque* was penned for flutist Sir James Galway by famed pianist/composer Sir Elton John. The original version has Galway supported by a string cast of what seems to be hundreds. Fiscal shortcomings necessitated a more modest backing for Lady Anne, but we feel as if Squires Barnhart and Coots did their best rising to the regal occasion. We send kudos to master recording engineer, mixer and great friend Jack Miller for his part in giving Anne just that right touch of etherealness for this majestic, melancholic opus.

We finish out with a tune connected once again to our friend Nan Bostick. Her Great-Uncle Charlie (Charles N. Daniels) was an immensely successful publisher, composer and promoter whose compositions include *Chloe* and *Hiawatha* among hundreds of others. He wrote many tunes under various nom de plumes. As Neil Moret, Daniels created a tune that is once sweet and hot. In its original incarnation, I have a feeling that Daniels envisioned a more "artful" presentation of *Song of the Wanderer* as Moret was the name he used when composing his more serious works. However, the jazzy melody and the classic "hot" chord progression beg to be attacked with abandon. This song, like no other on the recording, captures the joy and even recklessness with which Ivory & Gold careens down the path of its musical odyssey. We've only got one chance to get it right and we continue to appreciate your support and willingness to join us on our journey more than mere words can say. Thank you once again and ENJOY!!

Jeff Barnhart, Mystic, CT
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