

signum
CLASSICS

2CD SET

THE KING'S SINGERS

GREAT
AMERICAN
SONGBOOK



CD1 A CAPPELLA

1. The best is yet to come
2. Bewitched, bothered and bewildered
3. Let's misbehave
4. Night and day
5. Cry me a river
6. I've got the world on a string
7. When I fall in love
8. It's de-lovely
9. Beyond the sea
10. Cheek to cheek
11. Begin the beguine
12. At last
13. I've got you under my skin
14. The lady is a tramp
15. My funny valentine
16. I won't dance
17. Ev'ry time we say goodbye

Total timings 60.10

THE KING'S SINGERS

Featuring

SOUTH JUTLAND SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

DAVID FIRMAN conductor

ALEXANDER L'ESTRANGE arranger

CD2 ORCHESTRAL

1. Let's misbehave
2. Begin the beguine
3. At last
4. It's de-lovely
5. The lady is a tramp
6. My funny valentine
7. I've got the world on a string
8. Ev'ry time we say goodbye

Total timings 31.36



THE KING'S SINGERS

Introduction

Around the time The King's Singers was starting, one of the most productive periods of song-writing in history was coming to a close in America. Starting in the early 1920s, and continuing through to the 1960s, a body of work was slowly built up that unofficially gained the title *The Great American Songbook*. Many of the songs were originally written for musicals but stand proudly on their own merits, such is the quality of the melody writing and wittiness of the text. Although the songs were lost to "progress" in the late 1960s and 1970s (which probably explains why the group hasn't made an album quite like this before), a revival gathered pace through the 1980s and artists as diverse as Rod Stewart, Ringo Starr and Harry Connick Jr have re-arranged and covered a huge number of the best-known songs from the collection. We have always tried to champion popular songs that stand the test of time; whether it is the music of The Beatles, Paul Simon or Billy Joel (to name but three examples), the group has always steered clear of fleeting talent and "this year's sound", preferring instead to concentrate on music with true "first growth" potential. In many ways it is a surprise that it has taken us so long to approach some of this repertoire – but we hope that you will think that it has been well worth the wait!

The King's Singers

Great American Songbook

From the 1920s the emergence of the radio as the common form of in-home entertainment and the growth of the recording industry allowed the big bands of the day to swing right into people's living rooms, and popular music was never the same again. The influence of jazz was also strongly felt on the Broadway stage, which was just evolving in New York's "Melting Pot". Combining elements of Vaudeville and the Yiddish theatre with the popular jazz rhythms, chords and orchestrations heard on the radio, musical plays were transformed into the "Broadway Musical". This became possibly the most universally popular form of live musical entertainment the world has ever known, and it is the source of many of the greatest popular songs ever written. Classic melodies by such composers as Harold Arlen, George Gershwin, Richard Rodgers, Jerome Kern and Cole Porter, and later on, Stephen Sondheim and Cy Coleman, among many others, were introduced on Broadway and continue to be much loved around the world. With the rapid growth of the motion picture industry from the 1930s, many of these composers headed west to Hollywood, where their musicals were made into movies and where they composed especially for the screen, creating a new genre that has also yielded a wealth of American popular songs through the following decades. The classic tunes from this era have stood the test of time, with countless performances and recordings over the next half-century confirming their greatness. Recent terminology has grouped these songs together as *The Great American Songbook*, and the craftsmanship of the melodies, harmonies and lyrics are indeed the standard by which all other popular songs should be measured.

The best is yet to come (1959)

Music by Cy Coleman

Lyrics by Carolyn Leigh

Written for Tony Bennett, but most famously associated with Frank Sinatra, who recorded the song on his 1964 album *It might as well be swing*.

Bewitched, bothered and bewildered (1940)

Music by Richard Rodgers

Lyrics by Lorenz Hart

A jazz standard from the great partnership of Rodgers and Hart, from their musical, *Pal Joey*, that debuted on Broadway on Christmas Day 1940. The two worked on more than 500 songs until Hart's untimely death in 1943, after which Rodgers collaborated successfully for many years with Oscar Hammerstein II.

Let's misbehave (1927)

Music and lyrics by Cole Porter

A marvellous example of Cole Porter's witty song-writing genius, written for his first major musical, *Paris*, but not included in the final production; it was featured in the 1962 revival of *Anything Goes*.

Night and day (1932)

Music and lyrics by Cole Porter

One of the most famous standards of the *Great American Songbook*, written for the musical *The Gay Divorcee* (originally entitled *Gay Divorce*).

Cry me a river (1953)

Music and lyrics by Arthur Hamilton

A popular American torch song famously covered by Julie London, Ella Fitzgerald, Barbra Streisand and Michael Bublé.

I've got the world on a string (1932)

Music by Harold Arlen

Lyrics by Ted Koehler

Written for the 1932 *Cotton Club Parade*, one of the many revues held at New York's *Cotton Club*, which thrived during the years of prohibition, and employed the elite jazz musicians of the day, such as Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong and Count Basie, amongst many others.

When I fall in love (1952)

Music by Victor Young

Lyrics by Edward Heyman

Composed for Howard Hughes' last film production, the Korean War movie *One Minute to Zero*, this song was first recorded by Doris Day. It is best known through the 1956 version by the great Nat King Cole.

It's de-lovely (1936)

Music and lyrics by Cole Porter

Composed for the 1936 musical *Red Hot and Blue*, sung by Ethel Merman (starring alongside Bob Hope). This was another song added to the 1962 revival of *Anything Goes*.

Beyond the sea (1946)

Music by Charles Trenet

Lyrics by Jack Lawrence

An English language version of Trenet's 1943 song *La Mer*, which was reputedly penned in ten minutes on French Railway toilet paper during a train journey from Paris to the Mediterranean. The lyricist Jack Lawrence added the word "beyond" to bring the song onshore for this English version.

Cheek to Cheek (1935)

Music and lyrics by Irving Berlin

Written by one of the greatest American song-writers of all time for the 1935 Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers musical *Top Hat*. Berlin penned more than 1500 songs, and composed the scores for 18 Broadway musicals. Our version arranged by Alexander has the inscription "with apologies to Gabriel Fauré" on the score. We think he'd be quite happy.

Begin the Beguine (1935)

Music and lyrics by Cole Porter

Composed by Porter during a Pacific cruise on Cunard's *Franconia*, this song featured in the musical *Jubilee* (1935). The Beguine was a popular 1930s dance in bolero rhythm, similar to a slow rumba, which originated in the Caribbean islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique.

At last (1941)

Music and lyrics by Mack Gordon and Harry Warren

Written for the 1941 musical film *Orchestra Wives*, starring George Montgomery and Ann Rutherford, and featuring the Glenn Miller Orchestra. Perhaps the most famous version was recorded in 1960 by blues singer Etta James.

I've got you under my skin (1936)

Music and lyrics by Cole Porter

Composed for the 1936 MGM musical film *Born to dance*, starring James Stewart and Eleanor Powell, this song became a signature for Frank Sinatra, first appearing on his radio show in 1946. It became a firm favourite in his repertoire after Nelson Riddle penned his big-band swing version in the 1950s.

The lady is a tramp (1937)

Music by Richard Rodgers

Lyrics by Lorenz Hart

Featured in Rodgers and Hart's 1937 musical *Babes in Arms*, the song lampoons New York high society. The musical had a strong political undercurrent, despite which it seemed to catch the attention of the New York audiences running for 289 performances, before being turned into a successful film. This was largely thanks to a good plot and great songs.

My funny valentine (1937)

Music by Richard Rodgers

Lyrics by Lorenz Hart

Another hit song from *Babes in Arms*, this has become a hugely popular jazz standard thanks to great cover versions by Frank Sinatra, Miles Davis and Chet Baker.

I won't dance (1934)

Music by Jerome Kern

Lyrics by Dorothy Fields and Jimmy McHugh

A song from the pen of one of the top American theatre composers of the 20th century, Jerome Kern, the original version featured in the 1934 London musical flop *Three Sisters*. The song was revived the following year for the musical film *Roberta*, with new lyrics by Fields and McHugh (replacing those by Oscar Hammerstein, but retaining the title).

Ev'ry time we say goodbye (1944)

Music and lyrics by Cole Porter

A popular jazz classic that first appeared in Billy Rose's revue *Seven Lively Arts*, and has since been covered by many great performers. The song's most notable feature is the setting of the text "how strange the change from major and minor". We hope you think this is a fitting ending to our tribute to *The Great American Songbook*.

BIOGRAPHIES

THE KING'S SINGERS

David Hurley Countertenor

Timothy Wayne-Wright Countertenor

Paul Phoenix Tenor

Christopher Bruerton Baritone

Christopher Gabbitas Baritone

Jonathan Howard Bass

One of the world's most celebrated ensembles, The King's Singers have a packed schedule of concerts, recordings, media and education work that spans the globe. They champion the work of both young and established composers and, whether singing Tomkins or Takemitsu, Bach or Bublé, are instantly recognisable for their spot-on intonation, impeccable vocal blend, flawless articulation of the text and incisive timing. They are also consummate entertainers: a class act with a delightfully British wit.

With a discography of over 150 recordings, The King's Singers have garnered both awards and significant critical acclaim, including a Grammy® in 2009 for their studio album *Simple Gifts* on Signum. In June 2013, the group's contribution to classical recording was recognised when they were selected as one of only two vocal ensembles to join the Gramophone Hall of Fame, marking their influence and inspiration across the years. Always deeply committed to new choral music, they have commissioned over 200 works from prominent contemporary composers, including Richard Rodney Bennett, Berio, Maxwell Davies, Ligeti,

Lukaszewski, Penderecki, Rutter, Takemitsu and Tavener. Their album *High Flight* includes works commissioned by The King's Singers from Eric Whitacre and Bob Chilcott. It was recorded in the USA with the renowned Concordia College Choir and released in Autumn 2011 on Signum. Other recent Signum releases include *Swimming Over London*, which combines some of the group's favourite numbers with new songs and arrangements; a world premiere recording of Pachelbel's *Music for Vespers* with Charivari Agréable; and a DVD of Christmas repertoire released in December 2011.

The King's Singers have an extraordinary history of television appearances. A favourite of The Mormon Tabernacle Choir, they performed with them for the Winter Olympics and appeared in their 2008 Christmas concert, which was broadcast on PBS across the US to a combined live audience of 80,000 and is available on DVD. Following their televised performance at the 2008 BBC Proms in the Royal Albert Hall, London (also available on DVD - awarded a Midem International Classical Award in January 2010), they have appeared on BBC breakfast television and performed frequently on *Songs of Praise*.

In addition to their sell-out concerts worldwide, The King's Singers share their artistry through numerous workshops and masterclasses, and by publishing prodigious quantities of sheet music: at present, they have over two million items in circulation through their publisher, Hal Leonard. Their arrangements are sung the world over by school and college choirs, and by ensembles both amateur and professional.

Visit www.kingssingers.com for the latest news, blog entries, video blogs, Tweets and YouTube updates.

ALEXANDER L'ESTRANGE

ARRANGER

"If you had to create from scratch the perfect 21st-century musician, Alexander L'Estrange would be your template". (Howard Goodall CBE).

Alexander L'Estrange has carved a hugely successful and varied career as a choral composer, arranger, song writer, jazz double bass player and pianist, choral workshop leader, presenter of children's concerts, jazz examiner and trainer for the ABRSM, and passionate advocate for the importance of singing in schools. Born in Bristol in 1974, L'Estrange was a chorister under Edward Higginbottom at New College, Oxford, during which time he sang the solos on many recordings and won the prestigious Ernest Reed Young Composers Prize at the age of 11; he went on to graduate with a First Class Honours degree in Music from Merton College, Oxford. His flagship work, *Zimbe! Come sing the songs of Africa!*, a 40-minute choral fusion of African song and jazz, received over 100 performances worldwide within its first four years, cementing L'Estrange's growing reputation as one of Britain's most popular living choral composers. Following the enormous success of *Zimbe!*, L'Estrange was commissioned to compose a similar work to celebrate the opening of the state-of-the-art Mary Rose Museum in Portsmouth in 2013; *Ahoy!*



© Susan Porter Thomas

Sing for the Mary Rose cleverly combines sea shanties and Tudor music and has been described as "Zimbe's nautical younger brother"! L'Estrange's output as a song writer includes *Love's Philosophy*, three stunning settings of poems by Shelley, Tennyson and Byron (currently on the ABRSM Singing Syllabus), an award-winning one-woman musical entitled *Hello Life!* and a number of jazz originals which have recently been recorded by his wife, former Swingle Singer Joanna Forbes. L'Estrange, on an album entitled *New things to say* (www.lestrangesinthenight.com). As a consummate arranger, L'Estrange is highly sought after by the world's leading vocal ensembles including Tenebrae, The Swingle Singers, Amarcord, Voces8 and, of course, The King's Singers. *Great American Songbook* is something of a showcase for L'Estrange's talents as an arranger: ingenious inventiveness, exquisite harmonies, subtle humour, impeccable voicings and, unsurprisingly, faultless musicianship.
