

J A C I N T H A

Autumn Leaves

the songs of JOHNNY MERCER

1. And The Angels Sing

(Mercer, Elman) Mercer Music, ASCAP

2. Skylark

(Mercer, Carmichael) Mercer Music/PSO, ASCAP

3. One For My Baby

(And One More For The Road) (Mercer/Arlen)
MPC Communications, ASCAP

4. Midnight Sun

(Mercer, Hampton, Burke) Crystal Music, ASCAP

5. Autumn Leaves

(Mercer, Prevert, Kozma) Morley Music/SACAM, ASCAP

6. Days Of Wine & Roses

(Mercer, Mancini) Witmark & Sons, ASCAP

7. I Remember You

(Mercer, Schertzing) Paramount Music, ASCAP

8. Trav'lin' Light

(Mercer, Mundy, Young) Witmark & Sons, ASCAP

9. Something's Gotta Give

(Mercer) Mercer Music, ASCAP

10. Moon River

(Mercer, Mancini) Famous Music, ASCAP

BONUS TRACK

11. Here's To Life (soundtrack mix)

(Artie Butler/Phyllis Molinary) Artie Butler Music, ASCAP

**Autumn Leaves/
Les Feuilles Mortes**

(Joseph Kosma/Jacques Prevert/Johnny Mercer)

(original French intro and verse)

Oh! je voudrais tant que tu te souviennes,
Des jours heureux où nous étions amis.
En ce temps là la vie était plus belle
Et le soleil plus brulant qu'aujourd'hui.

Les feuilles mortes se ramassent à la pelle,
Tu vois, je n'ai pas oublié.
Les feuilles mortes se ramassent à la pelle
Les souvenirs et les regrets aussi,
Et le vent du Nord les emporte.
Dans la nuit froide de l'oubli,
Tu vois, je n'ai pas oublié
La chanson que tu me chanta.

C'est une chanson, qui nous ressemble,
Toi tu m'aimais et je t'aimais.
Nous vivions tous, les deux ensemble,
Toi qui m'aimais, moi qui t'aimais.
Mais la vie sépare ceux qui s'aiment
Tout doucement sans faire de bruit.
Et la mer efface sur la sable
Les pas des amants désunis.

(English translation)

Oh I want you so to remember
The happy days of our friendship.
In those times, life was more beautiful
And the sun shone brighter than today.
One picks up the piles of the autumn leaves,
You see I have not forgotten,
One picks up the piles of the autumn leaves
As one does memories and regrets.
And the North wind carries them away
In the cold night of oblivion,
You see I have not forgotten
The song you used to sing to me.

This is the song of us
When you loved me and I loved you.
We lived together, the two of us,
When you loved me and I loved you.
But life makes all who love one another
Part very slowly without a sound,
And the sea wipes off from the sand
The footprints of the estranged lovers.

Autumn Leaves (Mercer lyrics)

The falling leaves drift by my window,
The autumn leaves of red and gold.
I see your lips, the summer kisses,
The sunburnt hands I used to hold.

Since you went away the days grow long,
And soon I'll hear old winter's song.
But I miss you most of all my darling,
When autumn leaves start to fall.





Jacintha Sings Mercer: An Appreciation

by Paul Seydor

These are songs of longing. They hold magic and moonlight and, for me, somehow, the feeling that you've just left the party. A door marked never more. In that moment, you turn and in the quiet you enter the dream where you want to believe that love is whole. And you are alone and the sweet moaning you hear is not the fading laughter but you, singing a Johnny Mercer song.

—Jacintha

When Ying Tan told me that Jacintha's second album for Groove Note would be a collection of Johnny Mercer songs, I felt a quickening of the pulse. Here surely would be a recital of rare sympathy: one of the most purely romantic of all lyricists interpreted by one of the most ravishingly beautiful voices to come along in jazz and popular music this last quarter century. Few new singers of standards display as much awareness of the performing traditions of the American popular song as this Singapore-born and raised jazz singer, whose first album for

Groove Note paid explicit tribute to the great tenor saxophonist Ben Webster. But in her arrangement of the material and her approach, which placed primary importance upon the lyrics, the implicit acknowledgment was to Frank Sinatra, the greatest singer of the American popular song. This new collection, however, finds her far more in the mode of a jazz singer, evoking the leading lady of the American popular song, Ella Fitzgerald.

In putting it this way, I mean to convey no suggestion of imitativeness. Quite the contrary: all the great originals, not least Sinatra himself, were never shy about advertising who influenced them and how. They knew they were part of a tradition; their originality consisted both in how they preserved that tradition and in how they modified it. Jacintha is unusual among jazz singers in her articulation of the words – her enunciation is impeccable – and in the scrupulousness with which she attends to the meaning of the lyrics.

She opens "Autumn Leaves," for example, with the original French lyrics, sung in French, which tell a different story from Mercer's. I've always assumed that the lost lover in the Mercer version has passed away, the phrase "since you went away" an

emotional euphemism for a pain still too intense to face.

But in the French version, the affair has merely ended, and the likely meaning of the final lines is of the transience of all romantic love:

But life makes all who love one another
Part very slowly without a sound,
And the sea wipes off from the sand
The footprints of the estranged lovers.

Following a long, beautiful instrumental interlude, Jacintha introduces Mercer's lyrics in an attitude that is light, almost nonchalant, very "French," if you will. But when she gets to the crucial words, "But since you went away, the days grow long," where the departure of the lover becomes explicit, she daringly broadens the tempo, in little more than the space of a bar, to the barest linear motion, almost, but not quite, talking the lyrics.

(The phrase "the days grow long" is exquisitely rendered.) The effect is devastating, as if memory had suddenly pushed through both sophistication and hard-won denial and left the singer face to face with nothing but the naked sense of a love cruelly taken away. The feeling of loss is made all the more poignant by the larger

contrast with the pessimism of the original French, each set of lyrics made to resonate ironically off the other to the mutual enlargement of both.

She is differently original in "One for My Baby (and One More for the Road)." Sinatra used this song to end his greatest, darkest recital, *Only the Lonely*, pushing it to its bleakest outer limit, the clear implication being that when the guy leaves the bar he's a suicide awaiting only the final act, which will more than likely occur not long after the lights go out. Jacintha brings an entirely different experience to bear. By her own admission, she was thinking of "a friend who recently passed on from AIDS. He would have loved singing it himself at a quarter to three in his favorite bar." The song is still about loss, but she suffuses it with such warmth of feeling for the departed friend as to make it express a resignation that goes beyond despair into acceptance.

And it is much less self-preoccupied: when she apologizes to Joe the bartender for bending his ear, you feel not only that she means it, but that she's actually addressing him as an individual. Play the two versions side by side and you are struck anew with the power of the

performer and the enduring richness of the material.

I've detailed just two examples of Jacintha's art, but any of the others would have easily demonstrated the same thing: that the vital resources of her style are drawn from her own life experiences, while the reverberations sounded of her great predecessors serve only to confirm how very much she has made these timeless songs her own.

* * *

A note on the bonus tracks: Some explanation may be in order as regards the inclusion of one song without Mercer lyrics, "Here's to Life." Shortly before this album was recorded, I was finishing the first cut on Ron Shelton's forthcoming film *Play It to the Bone* (due in theatres about the time this album appears). For temporary music under the opening title sequence, a series of eerily beautiful aerial shots of Las Vegas going from night to sunrise, I laid in Jacintha's recording of "In the Wee Small Hours of the Morning" (from the *Groove Note* album *Here's to Ben*). The effect was so hypnotic that through several test screenings Ron and I wondered how we could better it. At the same time, however, it was felt that a less

familiar song with lyrics more appropriate to the movie would be desirable. Ron himself found the perfect complement in this recent one by Artie Butler and Phylliss Molinary. Yet, whatever else, Ron did not want to lose the sound of Jacintha's ethereal voice floating over those ghostly opening images. It turned out that she not only knew the song but was delighted to have the chance to record it, which she did at the same sessions that produced the rest of this album (though with a multi-track setup, as more control is needed over the individual lines for a movie mix). I'm as guilty as anyone of the cliché "they don't write songs the way they used to," but "Here's to Life" is certainly the exception. The exception that proves the rule? Perhaps, but no one can say that this song doesn't hold its own in the present company or, what is more, fails to provide a fitting encore.

— PS

Paul Seydor is a senior writer for The Absolute Sound and a contributor to The Perfect Vision. He is also a film editor whose credits include Cobb, Tin Cup, White Men Can't Jump, Turner and Hooch, and The Program. A short documentary he wrote and directed, The Wild Bunch: An Album in Montage, received an Oscar nomination.

Vocals: Jacintha

Tenor Saxophone: Teddy Edwards

Piano: Kei Akagi

Bass: Darek Oles

Drums: Larance Marable
on Days of Wine & Roses, One For My Baby
(And One More For The Road), Skylark, Autumn
Leaves, Something's Gotta Give, Travelin'
Light and Here's To Life.

Drums: Joe LaBarbera
on Midnight Sun, And The Angels Sing and
Moon River.

Guitar: Anthony Wilson
on Days of Wine & Roses, One For My Baby
(And One More For The Road) and Skylark.

Trumpet: Will Miller
on Autumn Leaves, Something's Gotta Give and
Travelin' Light.

Hammond B-3 Organ: Artie Butler
on Here's To Life.



Executive Producers: Ying Tan and Sebastian Koh

Producer: Joe Harley

Engineer: Michael C. Ross at Cello Studios, Hollywood,
CA, October 3 and 4th, 1999

Assistant Engineers: John Sorenson, Katie Teasdale

Mastering: Bernie Grundman using the Sony Direct
Stream Digital System

Recorder: ATR-100

Tap: BASF 900 @ 30ips

Microphones: AKG C-12, C-24, C-12A Neumann
M-249, M-50, M-49, U-67, U-47 FET, SONY C-55p,
Sennheiser 441, 421

Recording cables: AudioQuest

Cover and liner photos: Joseph D'Alessio

Jacintha Hair & Make Up: Barbara Leister

Design and Art Direction: James Lizardi

This is a pure analog recording. The tracks were
recorded live direct to two track tape.

Thanks from Jacintha to Boon Pin, Alexander Koh,
Hervé Conil and Miriam Enault.

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