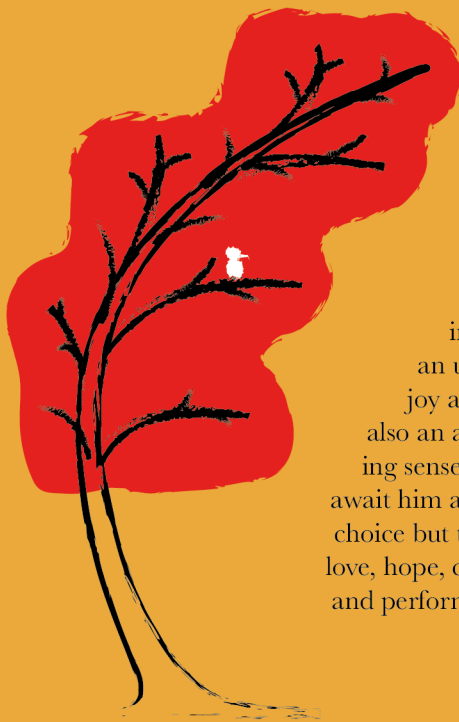




Benjamin

My grandson. His birth, in early 2023, had an overwhelming emotional impact on me. I experienced an unspeakable feeling of sheer joy and happiness, but there was also an almost unavoidable underlying sense of worry. What challenges await him and his generation? I had no choice but to start looking for songs of love, hope, comfort, life, and childhood, and perform them in the most intimate and vulnerable setting.

Jeroen

How lucky I was to run into pianist Jeroen van Vliet again. We had played as a duo before (at the closing weekend of the old Bimhuis in 2005), and he was part of my semi-acoustic quartet, Executive Lounge. His strong sense of form, sensibility, creativity, and musical intuition would make a perfect match for my intentions for this album.

Charlotte

Composer/lyricist Irving Berlin was unmistakably one of the Big Five from the American Songbook. With his catchy song **Always**, he knew how to perfectly capture the feeling of unconditional love from one person to another. He wrote it as a wedding gift to his wife in 1925. Now, almost 100 years later, I would like to present this album-opener as a gift to Benjamin's mom, Charlotte.

*“...Days may not be fair, always
That's when I'll be there, always
Not for just an hour, not for just a day
not for just a year, but, always.”*

Fools & Kings

It was Nat King Cole who turned Eden Ahbez' song **Nature Boy** into a major hit in 1948. It has never left the music scene since. Jeroen was kind enough to bring his vintage Fender Rhodes piano into the studio for this track (and two others). I truly appreciate his approach to the electric piano, and I believed it would be a modest yet contrasting and worthy addition to the Steinway & Sons D concert grand piano for some of the repertoire we've recorded on "Little Dancer."

*"...and while we spoke of many things, fools and kings,
this he said to me: The greatest thing you'll ever learn
is just to love and be loved in return."*

Niels

Benjamin's dad deserves some attention here as well. The 1934 composition **Little Man, You've had a Busy Day** by Mabel Wayne (with words by Al Hoffman & Maurice Sligter) beautifully describes some of the setbacks a little boy can encounter, such as losing his kiddy-car or some marbles, and the comforting role played by his dad. The song gained recognition through recordings by Perry Como, Bing Crosby, Sarah Vaughan with Count Basie, and later, even more so through Eric Clapton's rendition.

*“...Johnny won your marbles, tell you what we’ll do
Dad will get you new ones right away
Better go to sleep now
Little man, you’ve had a busy day...”*

Wayne

One of the most prolific and quirky jazz composers of our time was without any doubt Wayne Shorter. As a saxophonist and composer, he has pushed musical boundaries throughout his life. Jeroen willingly granted my request to record a solo version here of **Infant Eyes**, a true masterpiece from Shorter's classic 1966 Blue Note album *Speak No Evil*.

Tom

From the moment Benjamin was on his feet, he started dancing. Just another reason why I was attracted so much by the sheer joy and vividness of the beautiful jazz-waltz **Little Dancer**, composed by the American trumpeter extraordinaire Tom Harrell, and also why I decided to make it the title track of this album.

Charlie

Best known for his film work, Charlie Chaplin is also the composer of the somewhat melancholic song **Smile** (originally an instrumental theme appearing in Chaplin's 1936 movie Modern Times), with lyrics added later on by John Turner and Geoffrey Parsons. It encourages you to keep a positive attitude at all times to overcome whatever misfortune you may encounter.

*“...smile and maybe tomorrow
you'll see the sun come shining through for you...”*

Judy

Harold Arlen and Yip Harburg's (Somewhere) **Over the Rainbow** became Judy Garland's signature song immediately after it appeared in the 1939 film The Wizard of Oz. This song, about finding yourself a place far away from any trouble, found its way into countless performances and recordings. I took that as a challenge for an unaccompanied solo version.

*“... Somewhere over the rainbow skies are blue,
and the dreams that you dare to dream really do come true....”*

Shirley

Here's to Life, written by Artie Butler and Phyllis Molinary and recorded by Shirley Horn in Johnny Mandel's orchestra arrangement, touched me deeply from the first time I heard it. She reflects on her life, recognizing that she has had her share and finds that she's still in for more.

*“...May all your storms be weathered
and all that's good get better
here's to life, here's to love, here's to you.”*

Sylvia

The Five Pennies was written by Sylvia Fine for the 1959 film bearing the same name, starring Danny Kaye and Louis Armstrong, about the jazz cornettist Red Nichols. The five pennies I give you stand for wishing, dreaming, dancing, laughing and loving.

*“...so with just five pennies,
if they're these five pennies,
you'll be a millionaire.”*

Niles

Jazz pianist/composer Randy Weston wrote the cheerful jazz-waltz **Little Niles** for his son. Jazz singer/songwriter Jon Hendricks captured the spirit of the song tactfully in the lyrics he added to it: the unconditional love for your kid, even if he can wear you out and “make you shout”! (Hendricks cleverly uses the agitated sound of the middle part of the song to highlight that part of childhood as well.) Jeroen and I thought it would be fitting for the 'little rascal'-atmosphere of this tune to pick up the pace a notch.

*“...Little Niles warms your heart and cheers your day in every way.
Little Niles, he’s forever on the go and never slow.*

...

*There are days that his mischievous ways
make you shout and wear your patience out.
Still, you know you’ll stand his every whim
just because you see yourself in him.*

...

*When the play of day is done you hold him tight to warm him
through the night,
and silently you wish time would slow up, so he’d never grow up.”*

Praise

With **Praise**, composed by American jazz pianist Aaron Parks, Jeroen and I would like to express our gratitude to all the amazing people we find ourselves surrounded with and for the opportunities we have been granted throughout our lives.

Jared, Jonas, Jara, Diederik

The ears, eyes, brains, guts and heart of Just Listen Records. Thanks for all your efforts, making my ideas come true and making them sound and look so good. It's a real treat working with you.

Theodora, Milan, Charlotte

My love, my life.

- Angelo, October 2023

Other available titles by Angelo Verploegen

on  **Just Listen Records**



The Sweetest Sound

JL009

Angelo Verploegen, Ed Verhoeff,
Eric van der Westen (2018)



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A Handful of Stories

JL032

Angelo Verploegen, Nils van
Haften, Marc van Roon, Guus
Bakker, Jasper van Holten (2023)

Producer: Jared Sacks, Jonas Sacks, Angelo Verploegen
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Recording engineer, editing, mixing, mastering: Jared Sacks
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