



CHRISTIAN JACOB

Beautiful Jazz
A private concert

“I was raised to be a classical pianist. I began playing at age four and was studying at the Metz Conservatory in France by age 6. My life was all about classical music and I loved it.

I was about 9 when I heard “Take Five” by The Dave Brubeck Quartet on the radio, and I was knocked out. Later, I went to the local music store to get more of that “Brubeck stuff.” I remember the guy at the store saying, “Well, if you like Brubeck, then you’re gonna love this.” And he played me Oscar Peterson. Of course, I was blown away and bought some of his recordings. Later, I tried to order one of the parts so that I could play it myself. I didn’t know about improvisation and had no idea that parts didn’t exist. I had a hard time grasping how Oscar Peterson was able to do what he did. It was even harder to understand how he was improvising at such a level. I wanted to learn how to do it.

I began practicing improvisation on my own while I continued with classical music. I studied at the Paris Conservatory for five years and was awarded the prestigious First Prize in my final year. The next step was to prepare for international piano competitions such as the Van Cliburn Competition.

Everyone assumed I was going the classical route, even me, but when the time came, I just couldn’t do it. I had heard improvisation, and it was like a door had opened to infinite possibilities. I was in love with jazz music and afraid that if I didn’t try it then, I would miss my chance. It was a difficult choice to make, but I left classical not knowing if I would come back.

I left France and attended the Berklee College of Music in the United States. Almost immediately I was playing with (and learning from) musicians like Herb Pomeroy, Phil Wilson, Hal Crook, and Gary Burton. I could hardly believe it; to my relief, I discovered I was pretty good. My years of teaching myself improvisation had paid off.

My transition from classical to jazz happened many years ago, and now I find myself taking on the deeply personal task of releasing my first solo piano project. So much has influenced my playing over the years, but for this recording I wanted to go back to this pivotal time in my life and share my love for the timeless, iconic standards that brought me to this world of beautiful jazz.”

~ Christian Jacob



How Long Has This Been Going On *George and Ira Gershwin*

I wanted to open with “How Long Has This Been Going On” because the theme of this Gershwin classic really mirrors how releasing a solo recording has been on my mind for such a long time. I always wanted to do it, but I was involved with so many group projects that I couldn’t make it happen until now. For this recording, I wanted to have a variety of arranging approaches; this song is mostly improvised around some prepared counter-lines.

That’s All *Alan Brandt, Bob Haymes*

Even though 7/4 is an unusual time signature, it feels to me like a perfect fit on this song. It also reminds me of the great times I had playing with Flora Purim and Airtó Moreira; thanks to them, I learned to be comfortable improvising in seven.

It Might as Well Be Spring *Richard Rodgers, Oscar Hammerstein*

The first time I heard this song it was played by Bill Evans, so you can imagine the impact it had. Besides being a great standard, I have always been fascinated by the extended form. The initial idea that started this arrangement was the “twangy” country sound you hear at the beginning.

Etude No. 4 F# Major *Igor Stravinsky*

Stravinsky wrote “4 Etudes” for piano; this is the 4th one in F# Major. Even though the music is not jazz, the spirit of it is, which made me feel it has a great place on this CD. It’s really such a fun tune to play, and so few people know it that I wanted share it. It shows me that Igor was a jazz fan... I sure am a Stravinsky fan.

My Romance *Lorenz Hart, Richard Rodgers*

This is one of the first ballads I ever loved. I played it over and over in so many different settings, and still to this day it inspires me. So, it was always a “must” for me to have it on this recording.

Surrey with the Fringe on Top *Richard Rodgers, Oscar Hammerstein*

“Surrey” is such a fun song to play; I put it on this recording because I like how there is so much going on in the arrangement. It goes into different kinds of sections: some improvised, some written, and sometimes there’s a mix of both.

Tea for Two *Vincent Youmans, Irving Caesar*

This is actually the very first standard I learned to improvise on; I was about 12. I guess that’s why I have a soft spot for it.

I’m Old Fashioned *Jerome Kern, John H. Mercer*

This is my Bill Evans tribute—not that I sound like him, but I play to him... I play the (original) melody, but each time with a slightly different harmonization. This way, there’s always a different character or angle to the way you hear the main melody.

One Note Samba *Newton Mendonça, Antonio Carlos Jobim*

This recording is all about the music that taught me jazz, and you can’t learn jazz without playing the music of Jobim. “One Note Samba” is among the most popular of his songs, and for a long time, I knew it would go on this recording. My way of playing it is obviously very different from the original, and this is on purpose; I wanted to approach this tune from a different angle. The abundance of chords is designed to counterbalance the scarcity of the melody notes.

Body and Soul *Edward Heyman, Robert Sour, Frank Eyton, Johnny Green*

The standard of standards, and probably the first ballad I ever heard Oscar Peterson play. It’s one of the most famous and beautiful ballads I know. Everyone loves to listen to it and play it. This is an old arrangement of mine that I enjoyed re-discovering.

September Song *Maxwell Anderson, Kurt Weill*

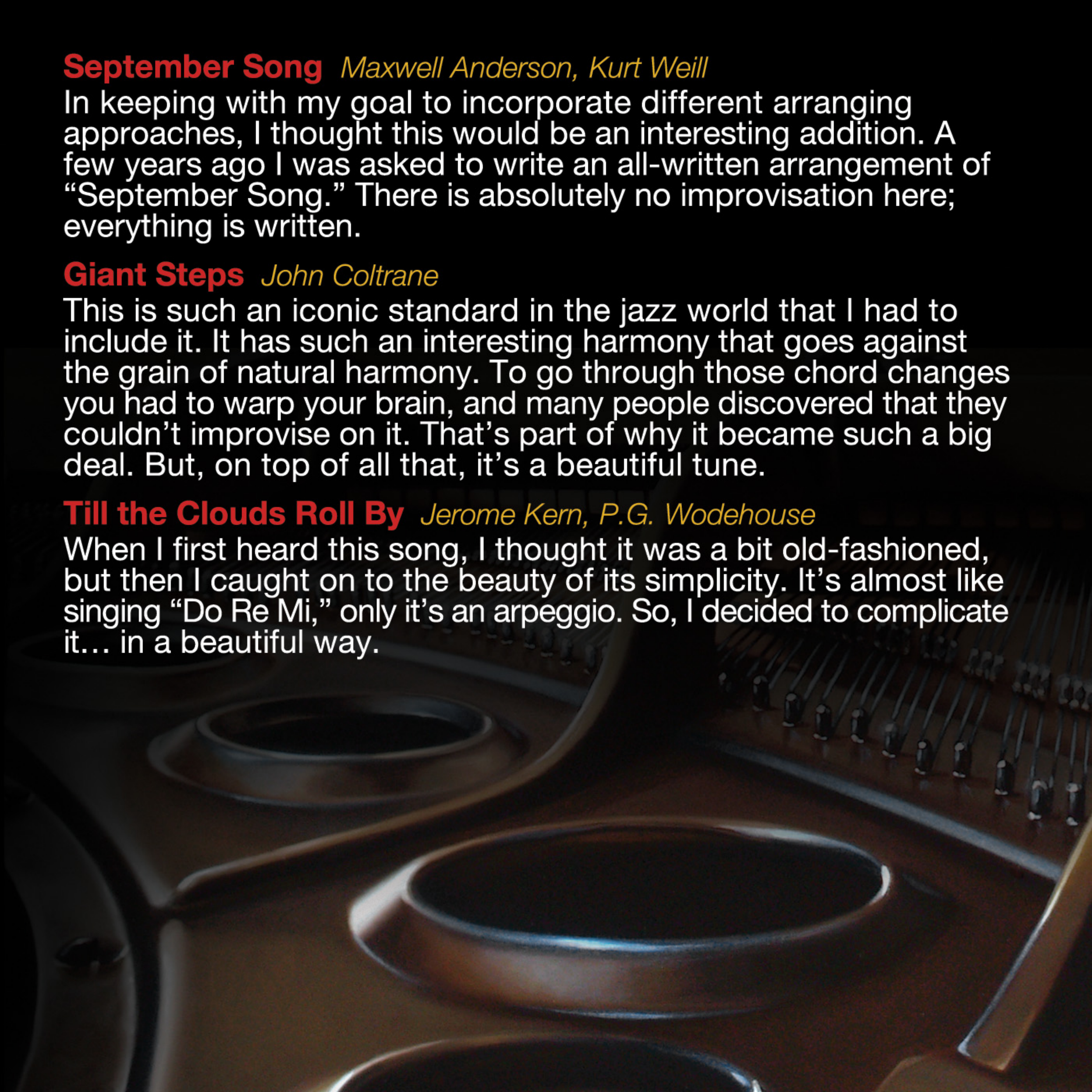
In keeping with my goal to incorporate different arranging approaches, I thought this would be an interesting addition. A few years ago I was asked to write an all-written arrangement of “September Song.” There is absolutely no improvisation here; everything is written.

Giant Steps *John Coltrane*

This is such an iconic standard in the jazz world that I had to include it. It has such an interesting harmony that goes against the grain of natural harmony. To go through those chord changes you had to warp your brain, and many people discovered that they couldn’t improvise on it. That’s part of why it became such a big deal. But, on top of all that, it’s a beautiful tune.

Till the Clouds Roll By *Jerome Kern, P.G. Wodehouse*

When I first heard this song, I thought it was a bit old-fashioned, but then I caught on to the beauty of its simplicity. It’s almost like singing “Do Re Mi,” only it’s an arpeggio. So, I decided to complicate it... in a beautiful way.





"From concept to completion I would like to sincerely thank everyone involved in this solo piano project.

In particular I wish to thank:

Wilder for her incredible dedication and love, Joe and Darlene Lacey for their respective artistry and knowledge, Mark Waldrep for his impeccable workmanship, Michele Ito for all her great advice, Kuni Murai and Betty Buckley for their unending support."

~ Christian Jacob

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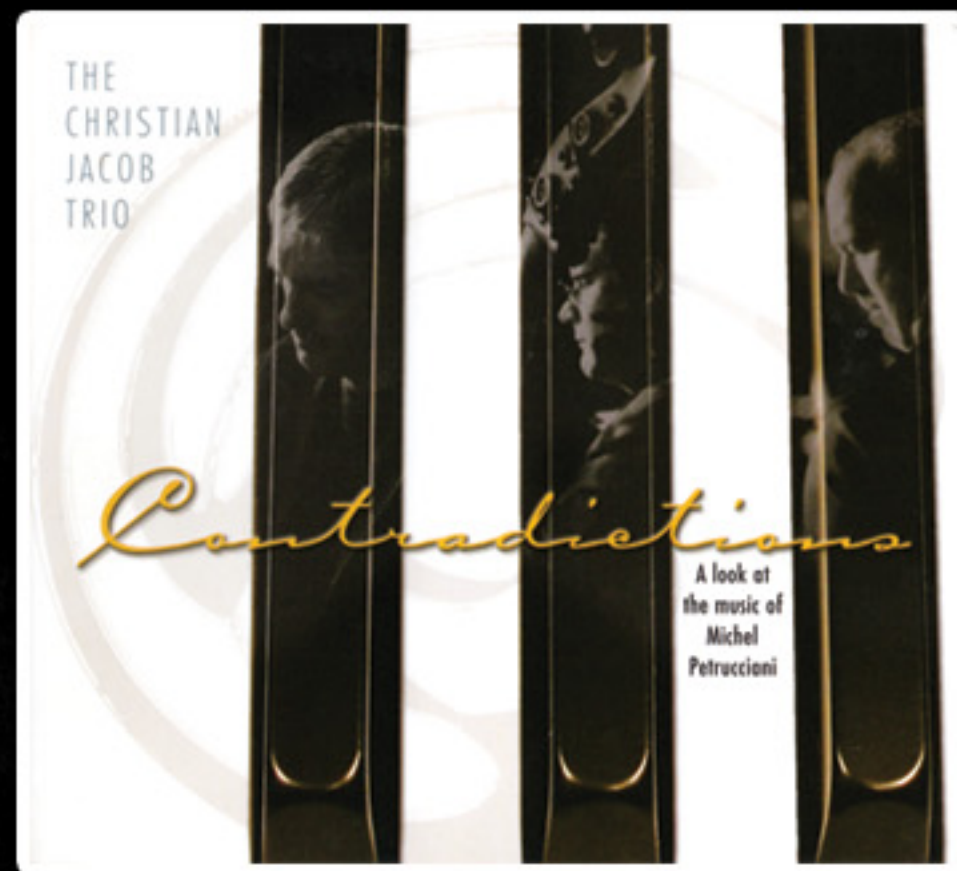
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Beautiful Jazz
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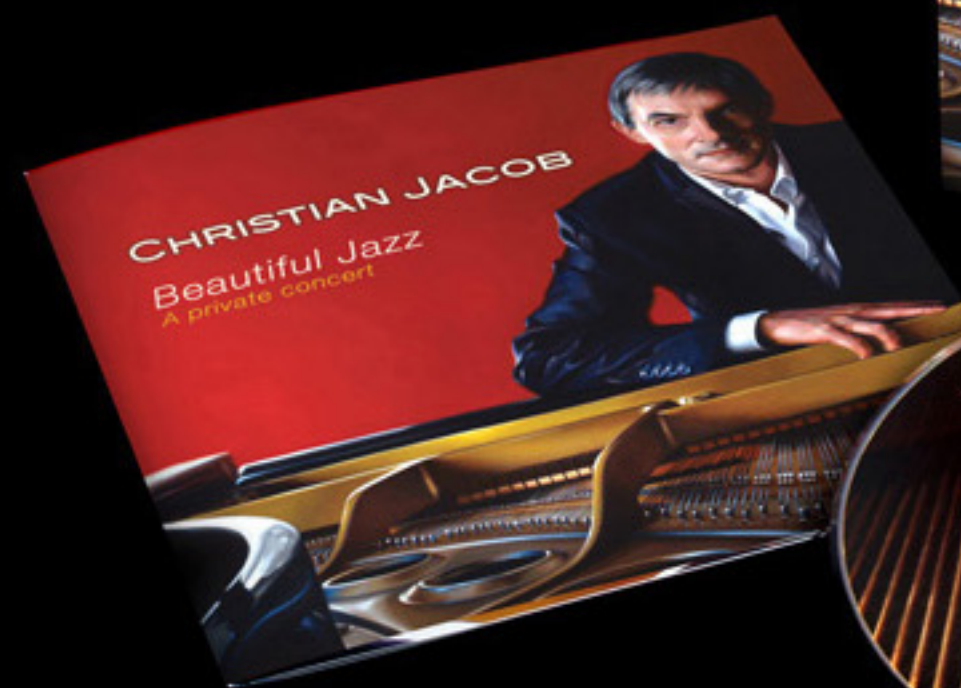


Styne & Mine
The Christian Jacob Trio

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CD

Produced by

Christian Jacob & Wilder Ferguson-Jacob

All arrangements by **Christian Jacob**

Recorded at Zipper Hall, The Colburn School, Los Angeles, CA

August 13th 2013

Piano: **Hamburg Steinway Model D Grand**

Engineered, mixed and
mastered by **Mark Waldrep**

Painting and package design
by **Joe Lacey**

Mixed and mastered at
AIX Studios, Los Angeles, CA

Microphones: 2- AKG 460
2- Neumann U 87 (Klaus Heyne Mod)
2- B&K 4003

Mic Pres: Sound Devices 788T Digital Recorder: Sound Devices 788T



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LP

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