

QUIET PLEASE

DARIUS DE HAAS, VOCALIST

STEVEN BLIER, PIANIST

- 1) **SPRING CAN REALLY HANG YOU UP THE MOST** | (4:27)
TOMMY WOLF, FRAN LANDESMAN
- 2) **THEY ALL LAUGHED** | (3:13)
GEORGE AND IRA GERSHWIN
- 3) **IF IT'S MAGIC** | (3:49)
STEVIE WONDER
- 4) **I'VE GOT A CRUSH ON YOU** | (3:18)
GEORGE AND IRA GERSHWIN
- 5) **MR. PAGANINI** | (3:40)
SAM COSLOW
- 6) **SOMEONE TO WATCH OVER ME** | (4:01)
GEORGE AND IRA GERSHWIN
- 7) **THERE'S A BOAT THAT'S LEAVING SOON FOR NEW YORK** | (2:16)
GEORGE AND IRA GERSHWIN, DUBOSE HEYWARD
- 8) **GOOD MORNING HEARTACHE** | (4:39)
IRENE HIGGENBOTHAM, ERVIN DRAKE, DAN FISHER

- 9) **PAPER MOON** | (3:06)
HAROLD ARLEN, E.Y. HARBURG, BILLY ROSE
- 10) **SOME OTHER TIME** | (3:13)
LEONARD BERNSTEIN, BETTY COMDEN, ADOLPH GREEN
- 11) **IN A SENTIMENTAL MOOD** | (3:42)
DUKE ELLINGTON, IRVING MILLS, MANNY KURTZ
- 12) **LOVE FOR SALE** | (3:57)
COLE PORTER
- 13) **GLAD TO BE UNHAPPY** | (2:59)
RICHARD RODGERS, LORENZ HART
- 14) **SOPHISTICATED LADY** | (4:35)
DUKE ELLINGTON, IRVING MILLS, MITCHELL PARISH
- 15) **I HAVE DREAMED** | (3:07)
RICHARD RODGERS, OSCAR HAMMERSTEIN II
- 16) **HERO AND LEANDER** | (3:30)
ADAM GUETTEL
- 17) **MIGRATORY V** | (3:13)
ADAM GUETTEL

HOW THIS CAME ABOUT

By Jamie Bernstein and Harold Chambers

We had seen Steve and Darius perform together before, and their remarkable chemistry and artistry was always a delight to behold. But it wasn't until they gave an impromptu performance of some jazz standards at a party that we turned to each other with a new sense of excitement: this was all the way to magic.

We resolved then and there that somehow, despite the daunting prospect of coordinating four busy people's labyrinthine schedules, we would find a way to get Darius and Steve into the recording studio and capture the essence of what we'd heard that night.

After months of cajoling, scheduling, reminding and rescheduling, we tuned the piano and assembled in the performance studio at WQXR one sunny spring Saturday afternoon. We had no agenda, no deadline, no clock — and no idea what would come of the experiment: it was just the four of us doing what each of us loves.

There was no question about it: something rare would happen whenever these two dove into a song together. Steve and Darius themselves were surprised by what they heard in the playbacks. Each was being stretched and challenged by the other, and both were finding new ways of doing what they already knew how to do so well. Darius's vocals drew unexpected swing and sass out of Steve's piano playing, while Steve's rigor and sophisticated arrangements propelled

Darius to unprecedented heights of vocal virtuosity. Sometimes, during a particularly astonishing take, we would look at each other in the control room and shake our heads in mute wonderment.

We all agreed to reconvene as soon as possible for more sessions. But once again, coordinating schedules turned out to be the biggest challenge. It took a few more years to add the extra songs that would round out this collection. So it goes, in this brave new world of the do-it-yourself music business: a business financed with the currency of love. At last we had our package for Bridge Records, and here we are—and here you are.

So, if you don't mind: Quiet Please.

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

By Steven Blier

A friend recently said to me, "You have two instruments, Steve." I assumed she was referring to the piano and to my irritating propensity for virtuoso whistling, but she brushed that idea away impatiently. "No! I meant the piano and the *singer*." Her observation set me thinking. Yes, I always feel a powerful, complex chemistry between my vocalist-colleagues and myself. Still, I experience it a bit differently: I play the piano, but the singer plays *me*.

This became especially obvious as I listened to the tracks Darius de Haas and I recorded for *Quiet Please*. We had plunged into the project with

no premeditation, no plan, and above all no rehearsals. The night before each session Darius would casually mention a few tunes he was thinking about recording the next day. Once we got to the studio, we'd make the most basic musical choices—nothing more complex than settling on a key and deciding about modulations and repeats. We'd give the song a dry run, and as the "Quiet Please" sign illuminated in the studio Harold would begin to roll tape (or whatever they call it in our digital age).

The nearly abandoned after-hours WQXR studio bathed our lengthy sessions in a conspiratorial glow. Most of us rarely get the chance to make music with such total spontaneity, and it's even rarer to do so in front of a live microphone. But when I collaborate with Darius, I am always able to find a powerful groove. My body knows what to do before my brain does. He makes my hands feel smart and anti-gravitational, and with him I constantly take risks that don't feel like risks, and dream up chords I didn't even know I could play. My nervous system pulses to his beautiful legato line, his sense of musical fantasy, his emotional depth, and his sense of rhythm. He seems to have a direct line to my right brain.

Plunging into each piece, I made just a few quick conscious decisions that usually had to do with what part of the piano I wanted to use. I think of these as "arm decisions"—broad choices about color and sonority. To evoke the confrontational rent-boy in "Love for Sale," I wanted a lot of bass; for the ethereal "If It's Magic," I stayed towards the top of the instrument; and for the ecstatic lover in "I Have Dreamed," I wanted to embrace the entire piano.

As for what my hands were going to do, what notes I was actually going to play...I really had no idea. I just let my fingers do the walking and gave them the run of the 88s. I let my instincts and my unconscious musical mind be guided by Darius. Since we didn't use printed music for most of the songs, I often felt as if I were playing from a kind of trance state, out of which I awakened when I joined Jamie and Harold in the control booth to hear the playbacks. Listening to the tracks now, some time after we recorded them, I still find myself wondering, "Hmm, where did you think you were going—and how did you think you would get back to F-major in six beats?" It still makes me smile to hear those moments when I seem to cross four lanes of musical traffic in the space of six seconds.

The repertoire of *Quiet Please* eventually fell into three categories. We chose a number of songs from the Great American Songbook, songs from films and musicals by Arlen, Porter, Rodgers, Bernstein, and Gershwin to which Darius and I felt we could bring something fresh. (After all, guys don't usually sing "Love for Sale.") Darius also brought in a few pieces that I associate with the world of jazz—"In a Sentimental Mood," "Good Morning Heartache," "Spring Can Really Hang You Up the Most," "Sophisticated Lady," and "Mr. Paganini." I conceive of them a bit differently from the theater and film songs because of the musical traditions that surround them—big bands, or smoky nightclubs with small musical ensembles, as opposed to brightly lit stages and 40-piece orchestras. Their emotional architecture also seemed different to me. Songs that come from musicals have a dramatic arc, an emotional progression that builds to a climax. The jazz tunes seemed more abstract; I felt I was backing up a moody tenor sax solo, rather than playing a character in a scene. In these pieces, Darius became a true Svengali for me, hypnotizing me with his voice.

We also included three songs by contemporary artists—the modern classic “If It’s Magic,” by Stevie Wonder, and a pair of numbers by Adam Guettel, “Hero and Leander” and “Migratory V.” Guettel has become well known to New York theater audiences because of his 2005 musical *The Light in the Piazza*. This dazzling work played at Lincoln Center Theater for 504 performances, won six Tony Awards, including Best Original Score, and was televised nationally. Our two songs come from a previous work, *Myths and Hymns* (2006), a loosely structured musical revue with a broad, Jungian theme: Greek mythology, and man’s quest for a relationship with God. Guettel is up to the task. The grandson and son of accomplished composers (Richard Rodgers and Mary Rodgers Guettel), he possesses a rich harmonic palette, a gift for soaring melody, and an extraordinary emotional depth. For Gershwin and Arlen, I played by heart; for Adam’s songs, I played *from* the heart—but I did use music. I wanted to get his opulent chords and fascinating shifts of rhythm right.

The act of making music draws on every part of our being—our bodies, our brains, our instincts. For me, music is at its sweetest and most meaningful when it is guided primarily by intuition. *Quiet Please* is a document of two musicians at their most unguarded and unpremeditated. We held onto the recording for a long time, occasionally burning copies for friends as birthday presents or Christmas gifts. But we all felt it was time for *QP* to go public. Six jam sessions, each with its own unique dynamic, have finally seen the light of day.



Darius de Haas's multifaceted singing career began with his Broadway debut in *Kiss of the Spiderwoman*. In addition to roles in musicals ranging from Lincoln Center’s revival of *Carousel* to productions of *Rent* and *Hair*, Mr. de Haas has consistently championed new musical works through his performances and recordings, featuring an array of composers ranging from Stephen Schwartz to Ricky Ian Gordon to John Adams, among many others.

De Haas won an Obie award for his performance in the Pulitzer-nominated *Running Man*. He appeared as solo artist in a pair of highly acclaimed concert tributes (Billy Strayhorn and Stevie Wonder) for Lincoln Center’s celebrated American Songbook Series. He has performed with numerous orchestras including the National Symphony, the Philly Pops and the Baltimore Symphony, as well as with New York City Opera and the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater.

Darius de Haas appears on numerous recordings; his solo debut album, *Darius de Haas: Day Dream - Variations on Strayhorn*, was released in 2001.



Steven Blier is the artistic director of the New York Festival of Song (NYFOS), which he co-founded in 1988 with Michael Barrett. Since the Festival's inception he has programmed, performed, translated and annotated over 125 vocal recitals spanning five centuries of vocal music, embracing art song, popular song, and vocal chamber music from North and South America, Europe, Scandinavia, and Russia. He also enjoys an eminent career as an accompanist and vocal coach. In recital with Cecilia Bartoli, Renée

Fleming, Samuel Ramey, Susan Graham, Frederica von Stade, Jessye Norman, and Sylvia McNair, he has concertized throughout the United States, South America, and Europe at venues ranging from La Scala to Carnegie Hall.

An enthusiastic advocate of American song, he has premiered works by a wide array of today's most prominent composers, including John Corigliano, Ned Rorem, William Bolcom, John Musto, and Paul Moravec; many of these works were commissioned by NYFOS.

Mr. Blier is on the faculty of The Juilliard School, and has been active in training young recitalists at the Wolf Trap Opera Company, Glimmerglass Opera, and the San Francisco Opera Center. His teaching has led to onstage partnerships with some of today's most exciting concert singers: Sasha Cooke, Dina Kuznetsova, Joseph Kaiser, Kate Lindsey, and Paul Appleby. As a broadcaster and writer, he has appeared both as an essayist and quizmaster on the Metropolitan Opera broadcast intermissions. His writings on opera have been featured in recent issues of *Opera News Magazine* and the *Yale Review*.

Executive Producer: Jamie Bernstein

Producer/Recording Engineer: Harold F. Chambers III

Acknowledgments:

This project is the culmination of the efforts of four people who, at the very core of it, wanted to celebrate and share the joy artists experience when they make music together. Those efforts have been lovingly supported by the generosity, time and support of: The New York Festival of Song, James Russell, Kyle Rudy, Peter Lieberman, David and Becky Starobin, Rodney Belzaire, Sheldon Steiger, and our piano technician, the late Thomas Sheehan. — DdH, SB, JB, HFC

From Darius de Haas: *Harold and Jamie— This would not have been possible at all without you. Thank you for your love, persistence, patience, ears, humor, keen observation, support, and faith. Steve— Ours is a connection like no other. I am constantly surprised, awed, humbled and extremely grateful for you— always.*

Mastering Engineer: Adam Abeshouse; **Transfers:** Charlie Post; Recorded at the studios of WQXR, New York City, 2007–2009; **Photographs:** Steve Vaccariello; **Graphic Design:** Douglas Holly; **Executive Producers for Bridge Records:** Becky and David Starobin; **Recording Notes:** These performances were recorded directly to stereo using Sennheiser and Audio-Technica microphones, and an Avalon pre-amp.; **Piano:** Yamaha C-7. Harold Chambers is a member of the Manhattan Producers Alliance.

Publishers: *Spring Can Really Hang You Up the Most:* Wolfland (ASCAP); *They All Laughed:* George Gershwin Music, Ira Gershwin Music, WB Music Corp., (ASCAP); *If It's Magic:* Black Bull Music, Inc. (ASCAP); *I've Got a Crush On You:* WB Music Corp. (ASCAP); *Mr. Pagolini:* Famous Music Corporation (ASCAP); *Someone To Watch Over Me:* George Gershwin Music, Ira Gershwin Music, WB Music Corp. (ASCAP); *There's A Boat That's Leaving Soon for New York:* George Gershwin Music, Ira Gershwin Music, Du Bose & Dorothy Hayward Memorial Fund Publishing, WB Music Corp. (ASCAP); *Good Morning Heartache:* Lindabet Music Corp., Microhits Music Corp., SONY/ATV Tunes LLC (ASCAP); *Paper Moon:* Anne Rachel Music Corp., Giocca Morra Music Corp., SA Music Corp. (ASCAP); *Some Other Time:* Leonard Bernstein Music Publishing Co. LLC, Warner Brothers, Inc. (ASCAP); *In A Sentimental Mood:* SONY ATV Harmony (ASCAP); *Love for Sale:* Warner Brothers, Inc. (ASCAP); *Glad to Be Unhappy:* Chappell-Co., Inc., Williamson Music Co. (ASCAP); *Sophisticated Lady:* SONY/ATV Harmony (ASCAP); *I Have Dreamed:* Williamson Music Co. (ASCAP); *Hero and Leander:* Matthew Music, Williamson Music Co. (ASCAP); *Migratory V:* Matthew Music, Williamson Music Co. (ASCAP)

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