

A man in a dark suit and white shirt leans over a grand piano. The piano's lid is open, revealing the internal strings and hammers. The background is a solid, vibrant red. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the man's face and the piano's interior.

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





"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

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.

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.

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.

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.

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 and mixed by **Mark Waldrep**

Mastered by **Paul Stubblebine**

Painting **Joe Lacey**

Mixed at AIX Studios, Los Angeles, CA

Microphones:

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

Mic Pres: Sound Devices 788T

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