



SHIRLEY
HORN

WITH
STRINGS

*Here's
to
Life*



GITANES
JAZZ PRODUCTIONS

BK02

PRINTED IN U.S.A.
314 511 879-2



1. HERE'S TO LIFE 5:36
2. COME A LITTLE CLOSER/WILD IS THE WIND 7:27
3. HOW AM I TO KNOW? 3:23
4. A TIME FOR LOVE 6:44
5. WHERE DO YOU START? 4:36
6. YOU'RE NEARER 3:31
7. RETURN TO PARADISE 5:08
8. ISN'T IT A PITY? 5:47
9. QUIETLY THERE 6:08
10. IF YOU LOVE ME 6:02
11. SUMMER (ESTATÉ) 7:38

Here's To Life

Here we are at last,

It's like a dream.

The two of us,

A perfect team.

Ira Gershwin's euphoric lines from *Isn't It A Pity?* crystallize Shirley Horn's feelings about this exquisite album, the fulfillment of an artistic dream. For 25 years, she's been a devotee of Johnny Mandel's music: his songs *A Time for Love*, *Emily*, *Close Enough for Love* which have become indispensable parts of her repertoire; his lustrous

arrangements for Peggy Lee, Tony Bennett and Frank Sinatra; his haunting scores for **The Sandpiper**, **Agatha** and other movies. For years, whenever interviewers inquired about her unfulfilled musical aspirations, she has responded "to record with Johnny Mandel."

Several hurdles had to be cleared before the collaboration of our premier singer-pianist and our most gifted composer-arranger could reach fruition. Shirley's long, self-imposed status as a musician's musician revered by other artists but little-known to the general public made it difficult to secure backing for a project of such

scope. Her salutary association with Verve/PolyGram, initiated in 1987 and crowned by her chart-topping 1991 album, **You Won't Forget Me**, has overcome that obstacle.

Shirley also had to confront her own trepidation about recording with orchestral backing, something she has resisted since her 1963 albums, **Loads of Love** and **Shirley Horn with Horns** (reissued in 1990 on a single CD, Mercury/PolyGram 843 454-2.) These handsomely produced recordings with top-flight arrangers and instrumentalists captivated critics and record buyers, but Shirley found them unfulfilling because Mercury chose to feature

her exclusively as a singer, disregarding her distinctive gifts as a pianist.

Separated from the keyboard and incarcerated in a tiny isolation booth, she felt frustrated, singing to the accompaniment of other pianists while the chords and harmonies she wanted to hear echoed in her mind. Recalling those sessions today, she stresses "The piano is my root, my foundation," and feels that despite the acclaim they received, the Mercury albums did not truly represent her music. "They aren't me." Forswearing big bands and string ensembles, she vowed to accompany herself in a trio format on all future recordings. The sole escape clause to this pledge was the prospect of working

with Mandel, whom she had never met. Someday, somehow, she was determined that they would make music together.

Busy composing and arranging in Los Angeles, a continent away from Shirley's Washington D.C. home, Johnny was aware of Shirley's reputation among musicians, but, apart from a few random tracks overheard on his car radio, he had never listened closely to her music until composer Richard Rodney Bennett sent him several of her albums. Johnny's reaction was characteristically unambiguous: "She's the best!" In 1988, after Shirley selected *Close Enough for Love* as the title song for her second Verve album, they began a series

of mutually admiring telephone conversations, during which the idea of recording together gathered force.

They finally met last April in Los Angeles, while Shirley was appearing at the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel's Cinegrill. She saluted Johnny with an immaculate instrumental interpretation of *Emily* but, at the end of the set, apologized to him, explaining that his presence in the audience had unnerved her and affected her performance. Delighted by what he had heard, Johnny assured her that, more than ever, he was eager to proceed with their collaboration, and offered to produce as well as arrange the album. That night, there wasn't much conver-

sation between these two intuitive artists; the looks they exchanged confirmed their affinity. Johnny gave her a folio of his songs, accompanied by a cassette containing authorized piano demonstrations of his chords, which she played incessantly during her 1991 summer tour of American and European jazz festivals.

To preserve her creative freedom, Shirley decided to record the selections in this album with her regular sidemen — bassist Charles Ables and drummer Steve Williams — and only then hand over the tapes for Johnny to orchestrate. In mid-August, Johnny flew to New York where, for four nights, Shirley, Charles and Steve laid down the trio tracks. As is

her custom, Shirley selected a program of stimulating, unhackneyed material. Two classic songwriting teams — Rodgers and Hart and the Gershwin



Photo by William Claxton

Johnny Mandel brothers — are represented by seldom-performed pieces. Two movie themes by Dmitri Tiomkin — Shirley is a great late-show buff — augmented the list, along with songs by two contemporary composer-

lyricists, John Wallowitch and Artie Butler.

After completing the trio tracks Shirley decided she wanted to sing two especially ambitious pieces — Johnny's *Where Do You Start?* and Butler's *Here's To Life*, recorded here for the first time, — with a full orchestra (and without her "root", the piano.) In September, several days after performing at the Hollywood Bowl, she arrived at L.A.'s Group IV studio as Johnny was rehearsing a 49-piece ensemble of hand-picked musicians. As the strings (18 violins, 6 violas, 6 cellos, 4 basses), brass and woodwinds attacked the soaring climax of *Here's To Life*, she shivered with pleasure and tears welled in her eyes. When it was



time to sing, her performance was uncommonly emotional, even for this normally intense artist. Luckily, a video crew was present to capture the moment.

Shirley offered Johnny no input about the arrangements for the New York tracks — just four words of confidence: “I trust you implicitly.” Then she flew home, leaving Johnny with a formidable mission. Shirley had devised complete trio settings for her performances; Johnny faced the painstaking task of orchestrating each piece without intruding upon, or compromising, her interpretations. He began by transcribing every note she played to make sure that his writing

would enrich, rather than duplicate, her harmonies. Then he employed his peerless compositional expertise to frame each performance in a rainbow of orchestral hues, mainly watercolors and pastels, with a few vivid primaries reserved for Shirley’s most emphatic passages.

In early December, Shirley received and enthusiastically endorsed the orchestrated tapes. But one problem remained. The morning after the last New York session, she arrived at Miles Davis’ apartment with a cassette of two songs on which she wanted him to play — *Quietly There* and *A Time for Love*. Miles agreed, but, tragically, did not live long enough to perform on the orchestrated tracks. In

mid-December, Wynton Marsalis, with whom Shirley has twice recorded, was appearing at Washington's Blues Alley. She dropped by to hear his band and, inevitably, was invited to sit in. At the end of the evening, she asked Wynton to solo on the unfinished ballads. He accepted without hesitation and, five days later, the album was wrapped up.

It's difficult to cull the highlights of this singular collection. Boldly orchestrated expressions of profound emotion (*Here's To Life* and *If You Love Me*) alternate with austere but equally passionate revelations (the unadorned voice-and-piano presentations of *You're Nearer* and *Come a Little Closer*.) The

sweeping melodies of Johnny's *Where Do You Start?*, *Quietly There* and *A Time for Love* prove, if any doubt remains, that no contemporary songwriter



Photo by William Claxton

Shirley Horn

approaches his mastery of the ballad form. Even the album's lighter moments the kittenish, flute-punctuated *How Am I to Know?* and the exotic *Return to Paradise*, a tropical nirvana of bird calls and provocative percussion offer

formidable displays of musical prowess. Subtle touches like the Glocca Morra brook that mysteriously ripples across Shirley's keyboard in the opening measures of *Isn't it a Pity?*, her unexpected but expressively felicitous chuckle during the release of *A Time for Love*, and Johnny's stately string interlude bridging *Come a Little Closer* and *Wild is the Wind* reflect two lifetimes of thought, feeling and musicianship blended in this long-awaited partnership. I hope I won't be considered immodest in thanking Shirley and Johnny for their mesmerizing interpretation of *Summer (Estaté)*, Bruno Martino's sumptuous melody for which I have written English lyrics.

Few songwriters are blessed to hear their work so exalted.

More than any previous Shirley Horn album, **Here's to Life** defies categorization. This "perfect team" draws on many traditions — jazz improvisation; French, Italian, Brazilian and Polynesian music; Broadway and Hollywood songwriting; symphonic voicings and harmonies to offer us a benediction expressed in the closing words of the album's title song: "Here's to life, here's to love, here's to you."

Joel E. Siegel
February 1992

THIS ALBUM IS DEDICATED TO MILES DAVIS

MUSICIANS:

Rhythm section on all tracks (except *HERE'S TO LIFE* and *WHERE DO YOU START?*)

VOCALS AND PIANO: Shirley Horn

BASS: Charles Ables

DRUMS: Steve Williams

Rhythm section on *HERE'S TO LIFE* and *WHERE DO YOU START?*: see song listings

VIOLINS: Arnold Belnick, Mari Botnick, Ron Clark, Isabelle Daskoff, Joel Derouin, Assa Drori, Bruce Dukov, Henry Ferber, Clayton Haslop, Reginald Hill, Jean Hugo, Peter Kent, Brian Leonard, Rene Mandel, Gordon Marron, Ralph Morrison, Don Palmer, Jay Shtrum, Eve Sprecher, Gerald Vinci, Shari Zippert
VIOLAS: Marilyn Baker, Samuel Boghossian, Kenneth Burward-Hoy, Rollice Dale,

Jerry Epstein, Pamela Goldsmith, Roland Kato, James Ross, Evan Wilson
CELLOS: Ronald Cooper, Larry Corbett, Todd Hemmenway, Igor Horoshevsky, Anne Karam, Dennis Karmazyne, Suzie Katayama, Raymond Kelley, Frederick Seykora
HARP: Gayle Levant, Dorothy Remsen
STRING BASS: Bruce Morgenthaler, Susan Ranney
FLUTE: Stephen Kujala, James Walker
FRENCH HORN: Jeffrey De Rosa, John Dickson, David Duke, Marilyn Johnson, Richard Todd, Brad Warnaar
WOODWINDS: Gene Cipriano, Steve Kujala, Lanny Morgan, Jack Nimitz, Robert Tricarico, James Walker
SYNTHESIZER: Ian Underwood
VIBES: Larry Bunker
PERCUSSION: Larry Bunker, Luis Conte, Mark Stevens

1. HERE'S TO LIFE* 5:36
(Artie Butler-Phyllis Molinary)
Piano: Alan Broadbent
Bass: Chuck Domanico
Percussion: Harvey Mason
French Horn Solo: Richard Todd

2. COME A LITTLE CLOSER/WILD IS THE WIND 7:27
(John Wallowitch/Dmitri Tiomkin-Ned Washington)

3. HOW AM I TO KNOW? 3:23
(Jack King-Dorothy Parker)
Flute Solo: James Walker

4. A TIME FOR LOVE 6:44
(Johnny Mandel-Paul Francis Webster)
Trumpet Solo: Wynton Marsalis

5. WHERE DO YOU START?* 4:36
(Johnny Mandel-Alan and Marilyn Bergman)
Piano: Alan Broadbent
Synthesizer: Ian Underwood
Bass: Chuck Domanico
Guitar: John Chiodini
Drums: Harvey Mason
Horn Solo: Richard Todd
Flute: Steve Kujala

6. YOU'RE NEARER 3:31
(Richard Rodgers-Lorenz Hart)

7. RETURN TO PARADISE 5:08
(Dmitri Tiomkin-Ned Washington)
Basses: Charles Ables and

Chuck Domanico
Percussion and bird sounds:
Luis Conte
Flute Solo: Steve Kujala and
James Walker

8. ISN'T IT A PITY? 5:47
(George and Ira Gershwin)

9. QUIETLY THERE 6:08
(Johnny Mandel-Morgan Ames)
Vibes: Larry Bunker
Trumpet Solo: Wynton Marsalis

10. IF YOU LOVE ME 6:02
(Marguerite Monot-Geoffrey Parsons)
[French Lyric: Edith Piaf]

11. SUMMER (ESTATÉ) 7:38
(Bruno Martino-Joel E. Siegel)
[Italian Lyric: Bruno Brighetti]

*Wynton Marsalis appears courtesy of
Columbia Records*

**PRODUCED AND ARRANGED
BY JOHNNY MANDEL for
Shadow Productions**

Executive Producer: Richard Seidel
Associate Producer: Joel E. Siegel
Production Assistant: Camille Tominaro

Trio arrangements by Shirley Horn

Mixed by Al Schmitt at Lion Share
Recording, Los Angeles

Orchestra tracks and vocal tracks on
1 and 5 recorded by Al Schmitt at
Group IV Recording, Hollywood
Trio and vocal tracks (except 1 and
5) recorded by David Baker at
Clinton Recording Studios, New
York City

Assistant Engineers: Dave Reitzas,
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Derrick Garrett

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Mastering Lab, Hollywood

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Concert Masters: Assa Drori,
Gerald Vinci*

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Conductor: Edward Karam
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Clothing by Donna Karan
Gloves by Aris
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Special thanks to Jean Philippe
Allard, Angel Ballister, Serge
Chaderat, Jules Chaikin, Charles De
Forest, Suzie Katayama, Sheila
Mathis, Audrey Morriss, Richard
Seidel, Joel E. Siegel, Camille
Tominaro, David Weyner, Shallah
Weiss and the Four Seasons Hotel,
Washington, D.C.

Also available a
video documentary:
**SHIRLEY HORN
SINGS AND PLAYS
HERE'S TO LIFE**
VHS 084 537-3
LASER DISC 084 537-1

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