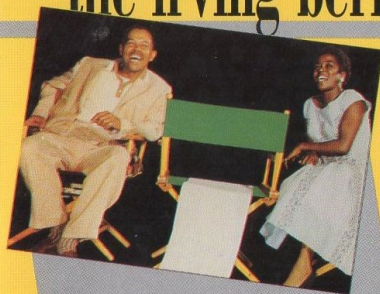




SARAH VAUGHAN & BILLY ECKSTINE

the irving berlin songbook



ALEXANDER'S RAGTIME BAND
ISN'T THIS A LOVELY DAY
I'VE GOT MY LOVE TO KEEP ME WARM
ALL OF MY LIFE
CHEEK TO CHEEK
YOU'RE JUST IN LOVE
REMEMBER
ALWAYS
EASTER PARADE
THE GIRL THAT I MARRY
NOW IT CAN BE TOLD

EmArcy
Great
American Songbooks™

ARRANGED AND CONDUCTED BY HAL MOONEY

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2. ISN'T THIS A LOVELY DAY 3'53"
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5. CHEEK TO CHEEK 2'46"
6. YOU'RE JUST IN LOVE 3'42"
7. REMEMBER 2'19"
8. ALWAYS 2'37"
9. EASTER PARADE 3'14"
10. THE GIRL THAT I MARRY* 2'59"
11. NOW IT CAN BE TOLD 3'43"

All songs by Irving Berlin.

**All Of My Life* and *The Girl That I Marry* are solo performances by Billy Eckstine.

Sarah Vaughan and Billy Eckstine, vocals.
Arranged and conducted by Hal Mooney. Orchestra includes Harry "Sweets" Edison, trumpet.
Recorded 1957 in New York.

Original sessions produced by Bob Shad.
Produced for reissue by Richard Seidel.
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Polygram Studios.

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All selections previously released on Mercury MG 20316 as *Sarah Vaughan and Billy Eckstine Sing The Best Of Irving Berlin*.

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THEY don't make records like this anymore, but thank heavens they did once upon a time. Here are the two pre-eminent vocalists of the modern jazz era singing 11 imperishable jewels by the grand-master of American songwriters. To borrow a phrase from Ira Gershwin, who could ask for anything more?

In 1957, after completing her Gershwin songbook, also arranged by Hal Mooney, Sarah Vaughan was teamed for the first time in more than a decade with her former boss and life-long friend, Billy Eckstine. In the early '40s, they had sung together in the Earl Hines band, and then in Eckstine's legendary proto-bop orchestra, which, stymied by a series of recording bans, never recorded. The music of Irving Berlin provided an appropriate setting for their reunion, since he helped pioneer vocal duets on Broadway and in Hollywood — including a genre of

songs ("You're Just In Love" is an example) that, much like bebop's propensity for creating a new song on standard chord changes, dovetailed two melodies simultaneously. At the time of this session, he was 69 and still composing, but five years later he wrote the score for his last show, *Mr. President*. The Berlin saga is an American legend: the son of Russian immigrants (Israel Baline was his name before a printer's error changed it), he ran away from home at 14, worked as a singing waiter and song plugger, and, though unschooled in music, eventually turned out more than 1500 songs — for which he was melodist, lyricist, and publisher — to become the most successful songwriter in history. In addition to those chosen by Vaughan and Eckstine, his better known anthems include "Blue Skies," "Marie," "White Christmas," "How Deep Is the Ocean," "There's No Business

Like Show Business," "God Bless America," "Puttin' On the Ritz," "Lazy," "They Say It's Wonderful," and "Russian Lullabye." Today, at 96 and reportedly in good health, he lives in seclusion in upstate New York.

Alexander's Ragtime Band. This is the historic song from 1911 that made Berlin and the new spirit in American songwriting world famous. It embodies the passing from the old (note the musical references to "Swanee River" and a bugle call) to the new (ragtime). A natural for duets, with its choir-like responses, it was sung by Jolson and Crosby before Vaughan and Eckstine; a few years later, Ray Charles and the Raelets did it gospel-style. Harry "Sweets" Edison's trumpet leaps out of the martial arrangement.

Isn't This a Lovely Day. There's thunder and lightning' as Fred Astaire woos Ginger Rogers in a bandshell. This song was one of the highlights of the 1935 *Top Hat*.

I've Got My Love to Keep Me Warm. Dick Powell introduced this in the 1937 *On the Avenue*, and Les

Brown had a hit with it a decade later. Ten years after that, Tadd Dameron used it as the basis for one of his loveliest ballads, "Soultrane." What a pleasure it is to hear Eckstine and Vaughan in unison.

All of My Life. No longer performed very often, this affecting ballad was a hit in 1945 — Thelma Carpenter sang it with the Herman Chittison trio. Mr. B. sings it solo for one of his finest renditions of the late '50s.

Cheek to Cheek. Another highlight from *Top Hat*, this is an unusually structured song since it has two middle parts; the lyric is notable too, as it begins in media res — "Heaven, I'm in heaven." The Ritz Brothers sang it with a comic lyric in *On the Avenue*. Sarah liked it so well she recorded another version a few months later with the Count Basie band.

You're Just in Love. This is the best remembered song from Berlin's last major stage success, *Call Me Madam* — starring Ethel Merman — in 1950, and is the finest example of his talent for crafting songs in which two rhythmically different melodies are

sung at the same time. Louis Armstrong used to do it with Velma Middleton. Berlin's most successful earlier effort along these lines was "Play a Simple Melody."

Remember. Berlin demonstrated his versatility in 1925 by scoring *The Cocoanuts* for the Marx Brothers (including the ineffable "Monkey Doodle Doo"), and two superb waltzes, "Remember" and "Always." The former, especially, has been a favorite of several jazz interpreters, including Gil Evans, Betty Carter, and Red Norvo.

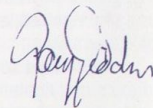
Always. Perhaps the most famous of pop waltzes, this beautifully crafted song has also been swung in four, notably by Frank Sinatra. It even made the charts in a rock and roll ballad performance by Sammy Turner. The present version includes the rarely sung verse.

Easter Parade. In addition to the 1500 songs he published, Berlin is said to have written another 1500 that never got farther than his file cabinets. "Easter Parade" is an example of a melody that almost got buried after it flopped in 1917 with the lyric, "Smile

and Show Your Dimple." It achieved its permanent form in 1933 in the show, *As Thousands Cheer*, and was reprised for two movies, *Holiday Inn* in 1942 and *Easter Parade* in 1948.

The Girl That I Marry. Eckstine sings this one alone; it was introduced by Howard Keel in 1946 in the show many people consider Berlin's masterpiece, *Annie Get Your Gun*.

Now It Can Be Told. This is one of two new songs written for the 1938 movie *Alexander's Ragtime Band*, which was largely a compilation of Berlin classics. Alice Faye sang it in the movie and Al Bowlly recorded it, but it remains the least known song in this collection.



Gary Giddins is the author of *Riding on a Blue Note* and the forthcoming *Rhythm-a-ning* (Oxford, 1985).

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