

LOST IN THE STARS

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Lost in the Stars is a wonderful project produced by Ted Howe. Vocalist Deborah Shulman, her brother-in-law trombonist Larry Zalkind, and his wife and some are joined by some of the finest musicians on the West Coast. They chose the sophisticated show tunes of Kurt Weill, Leonard Bernstein, and Stephen Sondheim. The mix of classical and jazz elements, the inventiveness of the arranging and the quality of the performances can best be described by the term often used by Duke Ellington, "Beyond Category."

Arrangers Ted Howe, Terry Trotter, Jeff Colella, and Brad Warner have produced fourteen "gems." No one of the performers are on every track. Sondheim's *Losing My Mind* is an intimate musical dialogue between vocalist Shulman and pianist Trotter and Kurt Weill's *My Ship* is an eight-part choir recorded by classically-trained trombonist Larry Zalkind. Only the opening two Bernstein tunes Larry Zalkind. Only the two opening Bernstein tunes *Something's Coming* and *Lucky To Be Me* have the same personnel. The use of overdubbing and changing instruments make each make track unique.

Ted Howe's arrangement and Shulman's performance of *Mack the Knife* is not only in the style of the classic performances by Louis Armstrong and Bobby Darrin. This "Macky" has all of the suspense and foreboding that the lyrics imply. The Ravel-influenced accompaniment features some impressive intricate line - bravo!

I Feel Pretty is not the snappy show tune of Bernstein's "Flower Drum Song" where a young lady discovers herself. Here it is the statement of a mature, sensual woman who is very comfortable in her own femininity. Jeff Colellas uses the Zalkind family strings (wife Roberta, viola, and son Matthew, cello), and guitarist Larry Koonse to create the proper setting for Shulman's sultry inflections.

If you are not familiar with Sondheim's *Leave You*, you are in for a treat. Deborah crafts this class "break up" showstopper beautifully. Koonse's tasty improvisation adds just the right touch.

This CD is a fine, rewarding musical adventure. The works of Kurt Weill, Leonard Bernstein, and Stephen Sondheim are a cut above the usual Tin Pan Alley fare. These are fourteen of the finest songs ever written. Arrangers Howe, Trotter, Colella, and Warner created settings that highlight the music and talents of the performers. Each arrangement is a study in instrumentation and every performance is superb. The accompanying musicians are always "in the pocket." The improvisations are tasty. Shulman's voice and the understanding of her craft shines throughout. Ted Howe spotlights Zalkind's sound and musicianship with just the right musical touch. Hats off to all!

George Broussard, International Trombone Association Journal

DEBORAH SHULMAN & LARRY ZALKIND: LOST IN THE STARS

Subtitled “The Music of Bernstein, Weill & Sondheim,” this disc features vocalist Deborah Shulman and trombonist Larry Zalkind delivering mature and intelligent readings of some jazz standards as well as a few Broadway pieces in a variety of well crafted settings. Shulman’s voice is relaxed, warm, unrushed and patient, with a subtle sense of swing. The supporting team of Jeff Colella/p, Joe LaBarbera/dr and Larry Koonse/g mix and match with a variety of guests that bring cellos, violas and accordions. The arrangements are quite clever; a tangential take of “Something’s Coming” has the band touching the outskirts of the melody while Shulman gently graces the tune. Hints of the Weimer Republic crop up on an attractively restrained reading of “Mack the Knife” while a pastoral “Children Will Listen” emphasizes Shulman’s sense of wonder with a lyric. Zalkind’s trombone is understatedly rich and warm, embracing a brassy frame in the reading of “My Ship” while a “Losing My Mind” has a stark and vulnerable vocals with only Terry Trotter’s piano for protection. Impressive music and musings here.

- **George W. Harris, JazzWeekly.com**

DEBORAH SHULMAN AND LARRY ZALKIND: LOST IN THE STARS - THE MUSIC OF BERNSTEIN, WEILL & SONDHEIM

Lost in the Stars is a classy little jewel of an album. It takes a couple of listens for the sheer quality and uncluttered lustre of Deborah Shulman’s vocals to take hold, so understated and subtle are they. But once they have you in their thrall, they yield refined treasure.

The album is based on songs from a trinity of musical theatre composers – Weill, Bernstein and Sondheim – who need no further introduction. The delight is in the ease with which Shulman teases out nuances and revelations from numbers that you might think you know inside out.

There’s an eerie, unsettling version of “Mack the Knife”, for example, which sweeps you up into a little vortex of menace, light years from the bravado that most singers ladle on. And if “The Ladies Who Lunch” replaces the traditional self-scoring attack with a more observational, modulated treatment, it’s certainly a fresh approach to some of Sondheim’s most visceral lyrics. That clarity extends to “Children will Listen”, a lilting “I Feel Pretty” and an assured, stark and mournful “Losing My Mind”.

Shulman’s restraint pays such dividends that it almost seems a shame not to hear how she might handle “My Ship”, here an elegant instrumental solo for her brother-in-law, the trombonist Larry Zalkind, whose contribution to the album is equally fascinating. He leads an accomplished band of accompanists who provide Shulman with some intriguing counter harmonies to work against. The texture they bring to the gently swinging “September Song” and the washed-up, after-hours blues of “Ain’t got no Tears Left” is sublime. Serious without once sounding earnest or worthy, this is an album of standards for grownups.

- **The Art of the Song (England)**

DEBORAH SHULMAN / LARRY ZALKIND: LOST IN THE STARS: THE MUSIC OF BERNSTEIN, WEILL & SONDHEIM (2012)

The respective output from compositional icons Leonard Bernstein, Kurt Weill and, to a lesser extent, Stephen Sondheim has frequently been putty in jazz musicians' and arrangers' hands, proving that malleability is a *sine qua non* for long-range success in writing; genius-level composing skills, of course, also tend to help.

While the actual act of interpreting the work of these three men is hardly original at this point, the *fashion* by which vocalist Deborah Shulman, trombonist Larry Zalkind and their talented compatriots dig into their music is wholly unique. They look at each of these fourteen selections as individual opportunities to honor each composer's original intention, while painting their own innovative brushstrokes atop these masterworks. While it would be easy to commit to a single strategy for a project like this, be it art song haughtiness, classical stringency or out-and-out nightclub jazz, Shulman and Zalkind take the high road, touching on everything but committing to no single avenue or approach. Zalkind's tone, honed through his work as the principal trombonist with the Utah Symphony, and Shulman's theatrical delivery hide no secrets about their respective stylistic comfort zones, but both artists prove to be just as malleable as the songs they interpret.

Four different arrangers were tapped for this project and each man brings something different to the table. Jeff Colella gives "Something's Coming" a terrific odd-metered makeover and brings a light-handed approach to "I Feel Pretty," while Terry Trotter moves "It's Love" from easy-does-it swing to Brazilian shores. Brad Warnaar turns "My Ship" into a rich and rewarding piece for a Zalkind overdubbed trombone choir, and Ted Howe removes the happy-go-lucky-swing shackles that often keep "Mack The Knife" from reaching its full potential. Here, it's reborn with chamber grace, riding atop a flowing 12/8 feel with graceful strings, accordion and, of course, trombone, helping to resurface its well-worn exterior.

Studio aces like guitarist Larry Koonse and drummer Joe La Barbera deserve some credit for helping to shape and mold these songs into their final state, but this is really the Shulman and Zalkind show. Shulman's clear diction and artful interpretations of these songs, and Zalkind's fine and focused trombone work make for a winning combination.

- Dan Bilawsky, All About Jazz

**DEBORAH SHULMAN (vocals), LARRY ZALKIND (trombone)
LOST IN THE STARS: THE MUSIC OF BERNSTEIN, WEILL & SONDHEIM**

Along with the fascinating myriad of musical sounds on *Lost in the Stars*, add my sighs of relief and gasps of true surprise: there's no "same old/same old" feeling on this CD by singer Deborah Shulman, trombonist Larry Zalkind and bandmates. Familiar becomes fresh in big and small ways and some daring ways. Those with open minds and ears will find some welcome experimentation in the shifts of usual tempo, tone, and emphases. While some arrangements and stylizations may at first seem to have been just jazzed up or dangerously lightened or loosened the grip of intensity, just wait. The underlying intent is not lost in *Lost in the Stars*. For example, the theatrical knockout punch might not be the in-your-face kind we're used to on "The Ladies Who Lunch" and "Could I Leave You?," the judgmental and keen observations still ring with veracity and vitriol in these two Stephen Sondheim bursts of bitterness. Both have arrangement

and piano accompaniment by Terry Trotter, who has memorably released jazz trio versions of Sondheim's scores over the years. (He has also collaborated with the singer in the past; this is her third album.) Despite the adventurousness, there's a serious, grown-up, entrenched-with-theatricality agenda that commands my respect.

What also stands out here is the way the evocatively sultry-voiced Deborah Shulman and the masterful (but non-show-offy) musicians share the responsibilities and spotlight in telling the stories and setting moods. In many arrangements, there's a lot of space between vocal lines where the musicians' role is far more than accompanist or counterpoint commentator. A soloist acts as a vocal duet partner might, taking frequent "turns" prominently laying down a phrase rather than laying back in the background. It's as if the parties here have created their own time zone, allowing the songs' many thoughts and details to be presented at the pace they choose. Some changes are far more subtle; "Losing My Mind," the other entry from Sondheim's *Follies*, is taken just a bit slower than usual, and is the one track with just piano. The accompaniment figures are familiar, but taking it at more of a crawl makes the character's pain more agonizing—as if "every little chore" and step and coffee cup sip is debilitatingly effortful. She's too burdened, damaged and drained to get through it any more quickly. It works.

Sondheim is also represented by three other titles, a languorous, lush "I Feel Pretty" and a more confident-than-usual and less agitated "Something's Coming," two items from the score of *West Side Story*, his early landmark collaboration with Leonard Bernstein. However, in the packaging's egregious error, lyricists for Bernstein and Kurt Weill's melodies are not listed in the credits—even though the song list, with *composers* (last names only, throughout), is shown *four* times. Ironically, the lyrics here are given immense, concentrated attention and interpretation by Deborah, whose acting skills are formidable. Only on a very few occasions are liberties taken there, such as adding the adjective "sweet" to Betty Comden & Adolph Green/Leonard Bernstein's declaration "It's Love," from *Wonderful Town*, at its extended fade-out. Cut from the same score, "Ain't Got No Tears Left" is the CD's least known song among rather well-known titles.

On the Weill side, there's the classic that gives the album its title and "September Song" (both with Maxwell Anderson's lamenting lyrics, and both more traditionally approached) and there's a whole new approach to "Mack the Knife" (in English). Also, we get Weill's melody of "My Ship": no vocal here, it's heard only as a multi-tracked trombone showpiece—hauntingly beautiful, reminding one of how the melody was used in the original context of the show, *Lady in the Dark*, as an elusive memory in the heroine's dreams.

Trombonist Larry Zalkind is this lady singer's brother-in-law, incidentally, and other musicians heard on the recording include his viola-playing wife Roberta and their cellist son Matthew on a few numbers. Arrangers are Trotter, Jeff Colella, Brad Warnaar, and the album's producer, Ted Howe.

- Rob Lester, Talkin' Broadway

Jazz Review: Deborah Shulman and Larry Zalkind
Lost in the Stars: The Music of Bernstein, Weill & Sondheim

The worlds of musical theatre and jazz music collide often, with the former providing plenty of room for exaggerated exploration and the latter setting the scene for improvisation and some compositional guidelines. Those worlds collide yet again with the release of *Lost in the Stars: The Music of Bernstein, Weill & Sondheim*, the latest release from vocalist Deborah Shulman and trombonist Larry Zalkind.

The record is somewhat of a family affair, featuring Zalkind's wife (and Shulman's sister) Roberta (viola) and son Matthew (cello). Jeff Colella (piano), Terry Trotter (piano), Joe LaBarbera (drums), Larry Koonse (guitar), and Chris Colangelo (bass) are also part of the unit, with Frank Marocco (accordion) making his presence felt and Ted Howe producing and arranging some of the pieces.

The material is sophisticated and Shulman and Co. take some interesting directions, making use of the singer's theatrical experience and her classical foundations to curve some tunes into nearly unrecognizable shapes. The group is nowhere near ashamed at careening headlong into some more demonstrative pathways, either.

Opening with a lively bass-line and LaBarbera's measure, "Something's Coming" is a good indication as to the fun to come. Shulman sings the Leonard Bernstein piece with reckless abandon, shifting tones and swerving through its loquacious lyrics. Zalkind's trombone proves the ideal complement, spawning the other half of the tête-à-tête.

The famed Kurt Weill tune "Mack the Knife," which first appeared in *The Threepenny Opera* in 1928, takes on new life here with a haunting rendering that shuns the poorly-read buoyant version popularized over the years. The astute choice, loaded with lovely strings and fine trombone accents, carries more of the shadowy Mackie Messer saga to bear.

Another Weill number, "September Song," is delivered with class. The song, covered by a range of artists from Bryan Ferry to Elaine Page, is played well with plenty of open spaces and watchful trombone.

Stephen Sondheim's "The Ladies Who Lunch," originally found in *Company*, is carried derisively and finds its "drink" spiked by Koonse's terse guitar. And "Ain't Got No Tears Left," a Leonard Bernstein song cut from *On the Town*, proves that this outfit can handle torchlight swagger.

Lost in the Stars is an album of finely-tuned music presented with flair by musicians of the highest order. Shulman's tones are elegant but sometimes cutting, a perfect match for Zalkind's straight-shooting trombone and the rest of the outfit's poise.

-Jordan Richardson, Blinded By Sound

Deborah Shulman/Larry Zalkind – Lost In The Stars: The Music Of BERNSTEIN, WEILL and SONDHEIM – Summit Records

This is a welcome reworking of three renowned stage composers.

The concept of updating Leonard Bernstein, Kurt Weill and Stephen Sondheim to a modern jazz context is not exactly groundbreaking. These are musical geniuses whose compositions have an innate eloquence that can translate in adaptation. There have been many interpretations of this music by diverse artists. But when you start with a source of inimitable material, it encourages innovation in the approach.

Larry Zalkind had a specific discipline in classical orchestral brass instrumentation. Together with vocalist Deborah Shulman, he was committed to interpreting these composers in an unusual jazz setting that started with trombone and voice. The result of this collaboration is *Lost In The Stars*. With an all-star ensemble, the songs are rendered with fresh atypical versions. The first cut to jump out is "Mack The

Knife" (Three Penny Opera). Most versions rely on a sly rhythmic tempo, especially the hit single by Bobby Darin. However, this one takes a decidedly new framework. Shulman's ethereal vocals are set against the near-classical romantic arrangement of Ted Howe with pizzicato and rich sentiment.

West Side Story is represented by two songs: "Something's Coming" has an undercurrent of rhythmic dramatics, but the vocals are subdued and blend into the ensemble. Zalkind combines with the rhythm section and resurrects Bernstein's musical prominence. The eager anticipation is balanced by a perceived melancholy. The use of guitar (Larry Koonse), bass (Chris Colangela) and drum (Joe LaBarbera) combine with the strings in an understated, slower latin jam. "I Feel Pretty" moves with a guileless charm that provides a singing counterpoint to the strings, guitar and drums. Three additional Bernstein classics are performed, including a ruminative, gentle bossa nova take on "Lucky To Be Me". Again, the harmony parts between Shulman and Zalkind are tightly correlated. "It's Love" is crisply arranged bop with the quartet and singer.

Emphasizing the plaintive ambivalence of Sondheim's "Children Will Listen", the orchestration is relaxed, adding a backdrop to the story. Violin does not overwhelm the inherent feeling... it merely adds shades of melancholy. On another note, "It's Love" feels like a straight ahead jazz combo with flourishes and wistfulness. Schulman's vocal phrasing reflects the conversational tone of Sondheim. Zalkind adds sentiment and texture on trombone, and eschews customary extended solos. However, he shines on the tender instrumental, "My Ship". The title track (from Cry The Beloved Country that was also covered by Bill Evans and others) adopts a traditional jazz structure, with trombone and guitar solos. The arrangements are not predictable.

Lost In The Stars does justice to the legacy of three important composers.

-Robbie Gerson, Audiophile Audition

DEBORAH SHULMAN-LARRY ZALKIND/Lost in the Stars

If you know what you're doing, and you offer us a program of Bernstein, Weill and Sondheim, we won't bitch about you not being Bernadette Peters, Patti LuPone or the Labeque Sisters. We might crab about 'why didn't you do...?', but that's what volume twos are for, aren't they? With almost everybody on here being related and having chops that run generations deep, the crew finds the simpatico to deliver a first class cabaret/listening date take on a load of contemporary, musical theater tent poles. Dripping with a mature, sophisticated edge, this is cabaret/martini music that you would go somewhere to hear, not to just talk over as the glasses clink. A top shelf effort throughout, these indelible composers have a new set of champions to spread their word. Well done.

-Chris Spector, Midwest Record

Deborah Shulman / Larry Zalkind Lost In The Stars The Music of Bernstein, Weill, and Sondheim Summit 2012

I don't often venture into the works of Bernstein, Weill and Sondheim...perhaps that could be the reason this particular recording with imaginative arrangements and the sophisticated vocals of Deborah Shulman is so organically delightful. The art of the melody seems to be an on going casualty in music but the ability to take on a tune such as "Mack The Knife" and dial it down to a gorgeous if not melancholy ballad is a beautiful thing.

Not to be outdone we have Larry Zalkind giving a stellar virtuoso performance on trombone while the arrangements of Ted Howe shine in giving fresh legs to some slightly shop worn classics. To "re-harm" such tunes as "Mack The Knife" and "I Feel Pretty" without disrespecting the original is a magnificent display of understanding the conceptualized approach to melody and how it plays a vital role in this particular project. A surprising twist for jazz aficionados is that while the more Broadway oriented tunes presented are also backed up with such gifted jazz talent as Larry Koonse on guitar, Joe LaBarbera on drums and off set with string players from the Utah Symphony in the form of Shulman's sister Roberta

Zalkind and nephew Matthew Zalkind playing viola and cello respectively.

The performance contained here much like the composers they represent cross genre barriers with ease and a deceptively subtle sophistication rarely heard from in the day of the digital download. A unique hybrid release broken down into jazz, musical theatre and the more modern classical. If your school is lucky enough to still have music appreciation then this release should be required listening! An exquisite experience to be savored!

- Brent Black, Critical Jazz

Fine & Mellow - Three Voices and Deborah Shulman/Larry Zalkind

“Summit Records hits a quiet home run with the release of Deborah Shulman & Larry Zalkind's *Lost in the Stars: The Music of Bernstein, Weill & Sondheim*.

Time out! This is not a jazz vocals disc. What it is is a most superior show-tunes recital, specifically focusing on Leonard Bernstein, Stephen Sondheim and Kurt Weill. At first blush, it would appear that this is an unfortunate mixing of musical theater generations, marring an otherwise well-conceived theme. But first blush would be too simple and wrong. Weill to Bernstein to Sondheim is logical evolution of the most sophisticated writing for the stage, something quite apart from Tin Pan Alley, something much more grown up.

Lost in the Stars: The Music of Bernstein, Weill & Sondheim continues the delicate art of song craft heard in *Transitions*, expanding it to the vocal realm. Vocalist Deborah Shulman and brother-in-law and trombonist Larry Zalkind give an almost classical reading of the Bernstein-Sondheim-Weill songbooks. The opening Bernstein pieces are perfectly punctuated by Zalkind's classically-trained trombone. He provides a brass backbone to these carefree pieces as Shulman sings them with sensitivity and insight. The "Mack the Knife" here is no Bobby Darin, it is almost Late Romantic, like Richard Strauss having drinks with Weill and the two playing truth or dare at the piano. Most sophisticated are the Sondheim pieces. "Children Will Listen" is an adult lullaby warning for adults and "Losing My Mind" is the result of not heeding that warning. "Leave You" may be the greatest breakup song most people have never heard.

It must be noted that this disc is produced by Ted Howe, a West Coast musical mainstay and close friend of the principles. His considerable arranging talents were responsible for a novel "Mack" and his horn arrangements for Zalkind make "Lucky to be Me" and "It's Love" sparkle. The title piece, Weill's "Lost in the Stars" from *Cry, The Beloved Country* (1948), went on to become a favorite of pianist Bill Evans. It is no wonder as melodically rich as the song is, Evans would have had to have close empathy with it, lyrically and harmonically. Shulman lays waste to the emotional landscape of the song as Howe further deepens the piece with his careful direction of Zalkind. In the end, what this is, is songcraft of the highest order.”

- C. Michael Bailey

Deborah Shulman and Larry Zalkind: *Lost in the Stars* (Summit)

“Songs by Leonard Bernstein, Stephen Sondheim and Kurt Weill all share elements seldom seen in current composition: good melody and even better lyrics. "Lost in the Stars" is a collection of 14 classics from these three composers from singer Deborah Shulman and trombonist Larry Zalkind. They do them in a jazz-like fashion, with small bits of improvisation from the instrumentalists. But the best part of album is the song presentation of Shulman, who has a fine mezzo voice and a great grasp of songs. Her versions of Sondheim's "Children Will Listen" and "Not While I'm Around" have all the heart needed in those pieces. Her "The Ladies Who Lunch" has a sense of swing and cynicism. The most original version, though, is her slow version of "Mack the Knife" with a string trio and accordion. Besides fine accompaniment throughout, an overdubbed Zalkind also is a one-man section on "My Ship." Simply put, this is fine music.

- Bob Karlovits, Pittsburgh Tribune-Review