

MY
GÁBRIEL
FAVOURITE
HELGA RIEDL
STINGS

GABOR VARGA JAZZ QUARTET



HUNNIA RECORDS

Gabor Varga

Steinway & Sons Model D Grand Piano
Bogányi Piano B-292 Grand (track7)

Tibor Csuhaj-Barna

Double bass

György Jeszenszky

Drums

Richard Szaniszló

Vibraphone

Gábrriel Farkas

Vocal

Helga Riedl

Vocal





Being a jazz musician is a schizoid state. On the one hand, it defines you and limits you, on the other hand, it is an existence building itself up from everything. In interviews and talks, I'm often asked about what kind of music I listen to. And many times you can feel the expectation that a jazz pianist of any standard should of course listen to highly artistic music exclusively, and even more specifically, jazz. But it is a huge mistake to assume so. I was born in 1976 in Hungary. The music scene of the '80s behind the iron curtain was excessively controlled. I was lucky, because my parents understood and loved music, and they tried to get foreign editions, Mostly from Yugoslavia and East Germany (DDR), that were almost unobtainable in those days. And true, we listened to jazz more than any other genre at home. However, as a teenage boy, there wouldn't have been much point talking about Erroll Garner or Oscar Peterson to my friends at the time. That decade was the heyday of heavy metal glam rock. I admit, I also loved the early albums of Iron Maiden, AC/DC and Deep Purple. At that time, I didn't realize it specifically, but now I know that I loved those long guitar solos—it wasn't an accident, it was an actual connection between the jazz I listened to at home and the heavy metal and hard rock that we young boys listened to so much. It goes without saying that the majority of the albums that were almost impossible to buy here made it to Hungary only many years later. As I remember, the first commercial radio station that broadcast not only in Hungarian but in German too back then was Danubius. It was then that I first heard current foreign, global hits. As years went by, instead of always thinking about mischief with my friends, I grew more interested in girls, and in trying to develop relationships.





As girls became more and more interesting, I started enjoying calmer, more melodic and quieter music. Of course, at home jazz was ever present. The musical trend of the early years continued similarly. I listened to more and more Queen and Sting. I felt the power they radiated, but now I understood the feelings behind them too. Of course, I didn't understand the lyrics, but the arch of their melodies, their musicality was much better shaped, more lyrical and sensual than the rock music before them. In retrospect, I have to say that it was almost a straight road that led me to the music of Sting in my teens. As a kind of Holy Grail, it had everything: I could hear the harder, punk-like riffs, the infinitely simplified, catchy melody and the jazz in it, thanks to Branford Marsalis. I didn't know the music of Police too well, apart from one or two hits. I was much more familiar with the solo career of Sting, which is normal for my generation. And now, let's fast forward almost XX years. After over a dozen published albums, almost all of which were jazz albums of various styles, I started to get a feel of what kind of jazz it is that I not only enjoy playing, but I also like to listen to.





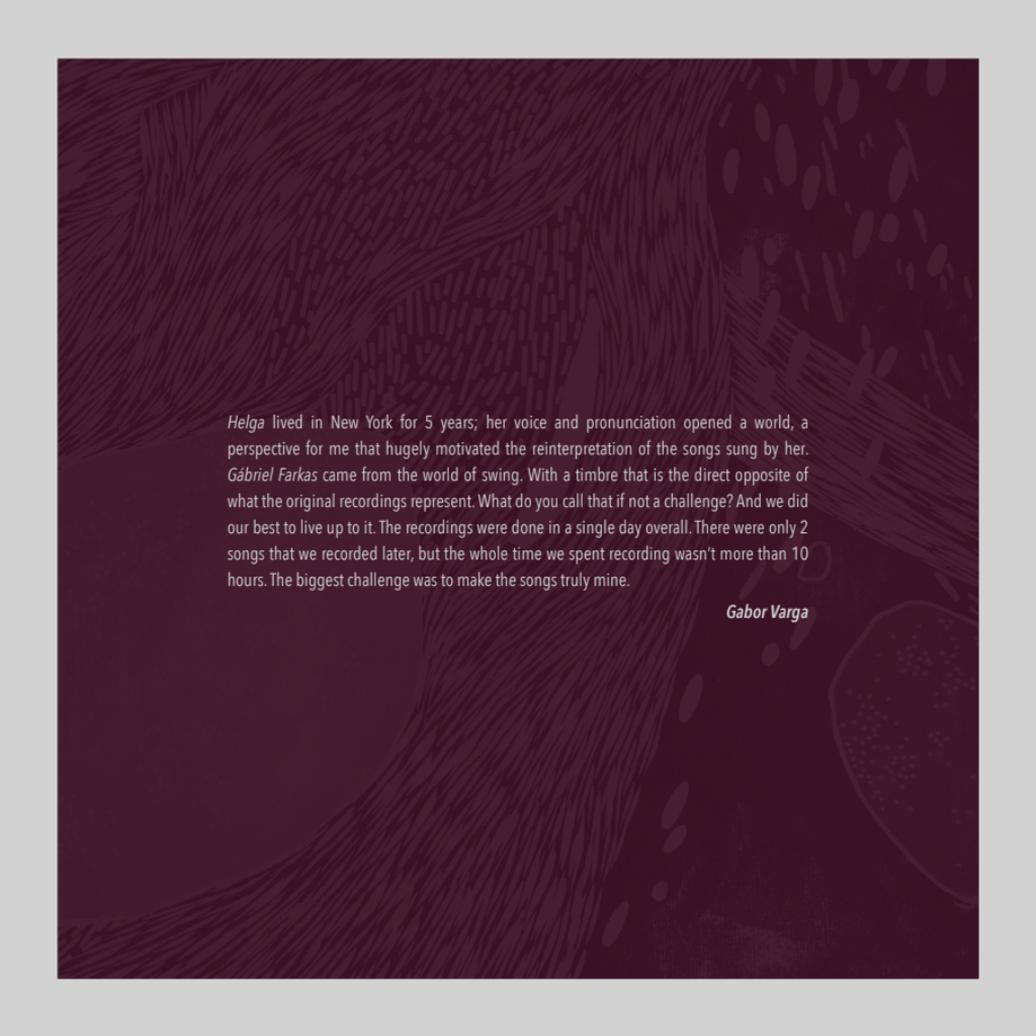
Every musician has their own creative process. For me, the first few years and editions were clearly about finding my way. I wanted to compose, play and record many kinds of music. I wanted to know what makes me feel really good, what it is that gives me the sense of "just right". I felt that for the first time about my edition titled Coll Jazz. Then years went by again, and I made all sorts of music, playing in a quartet or solo. I appeared in many albums as a guest pianist. It is like climbing a mountain. There are countless paths passing through countless valleys leading to the summit, but as you get closer to the top, the possibilities become fewer and fewer. At the end, you get to the point where you feel that this is your own way, the only way to your goal. This music is what I can best realize when playing in a trio, out of all the possible formations. But what does this all have to do with the album You are holding in your hand? Well, this is where the past XX years, jazz and the question of what I listen to that I keep being asked all the time come together. Where the ensemble sound that is so clear to me now and the clear origin of all these and what it develops into come together. Adapting pop music to the world of jazz is not an overly difficult task, there have been many examples for that in the past few years, some more successful than others. Less successful attempts at this typically make the mistake of using corny jazz ornamentations over and over again, adding an endless flow of clichés and commonplaces and applying a predictable overall design. I wanted to make sure to avoid that. In order to be able to adapt non-jazz songs that were written by someone else to my own musical world in a way that is credible in my standards, I had to be perfectly aware of my own music. That is why I needed those 30 years, and that is why it was important for me to recognise what kind of jazz music I like to play.





By the time the idea finally developed, you could say that I had an easy job. Certainly, it is never easy to step out of a fundamentally creative role into being a mixture of composer and performer, as these songs were not written by me. The feelings induced by these songs were not born from me, so I couldn't build on that now. Instead, the songs joined me as travel companions on the clear and straight path I made for myself over the years. The band was a given, we have been playing together for years, and the guys know my processes. With a minimum amount of, or preferably no rehearsal at all, building on the combination of the musicality in us and reliable technical skills, made unique thanks to its spontaneity. I believe this has become a kind of trademark of our band. Naturally, there is the question of language, the singers. It is always a delicate matter when it comes to English in a Central Eastern European country. Of course, I don't mean that there aren't many talents speaking and singing in excellent English in Hungary, but it is still a little like choosing a good wine. There are many outstanding wine regions in Hungary, with hundreds of outstanding wines, but you can't taste all of them. As winemakers feel the taste, I hear the voice of the singer in me. I knew what I was looking for. Sting has a truly unique voice. Trying to find a singer who can reproduce his timbre, or even traces of it, would have been a huge mistake. So, the only conceivable direction to take was to go for contrast, especially as for some of the songs I envisioned a female voice. If possible, the female voice had to be fundamentally distinct in its character and style from the male timbre. I think we achieved this without fault.





Helga lived in New York for 5 years; her voice and pronunciation opened a world, a perspective for me that hugely motivated the reinterpretation of the songs sung by her. *Gábor Farkas* came from the world of swing. With a timbre that is the direct opposite of what the original recordings represent. What do you call that if not a challenge? And we did our best to live up to it. The recordings were done in a single day overall. There were only 2 songs that we recorded later, but the whole time we spent recording wasn't more than 10 hours. The biggest challenge was to make the songs truly mine.

Gabor Varga





I always loved to listen these Sting songs, but never got the courage to sing any of those. When I got the call to join this session, at first I had a little sentimental feeling as they did recall my teenage experiences. I remember to listen Sting in a socialist car called Lada after the change in Hungary at the early 90's. It was the cool sound of western culture, but it always had the touch of classical jazz I always loved.

Some of them were too iconic that I didn't want to sing them. I respect the original versions so much, so I refused to do any remake. Now we had to find the perfect way to do our own interpretations. So I started my homework as I always do with classical jazz songs. I read the lyrics as poems. Poems like Cole Porter or Irving Berlin lyrics. I went through melodies and harmonies and I looked for the deepest meanings.

The most important thing for me was not to sing, but to tell the stories. I didn't want to make it nice or fine, but most of all to be honest. With the clear sound of the studio and the vibe between Vargas great musicians it was easy to find my point of view.

I hope you can feel that in this unique session.

Gábor Farkas





Vanda Csipler
(Symbiosis, Lino press)

GABOR VARGA JAZZ QUARTET

MY FAVORITE STINGS

1. It's Probably Me* 4:51
2. Roxane 5:43
3. Empty Chair 3:11
4. When We Dance 5:22
5. We'll Be Together 4:18
6. Every Breath You Take 3:59
7. Fragile 5:05
8. Shape of My Heart 5:40

Composed by Sting, except: Sting - Eric Clapton*

Gabor Varga Jazz Quartet

Gábor Farkas - *vocal (track 1,3,5,7,8)*

Helga Riedle - *vocal (track 4,6)*

Recording at **SuperSize Recording**, 2020–2021

Piano technicians: **Balázs Tóth, Mihály Magyar**

Balance and recording engineer: **Dexter, Tibor Laho**

Mastering engineer: **Tom Caulfield**

Recorded audio format: **Native DSD256** (Pyramix, Merging Hapi)

Cover art: **Vanda Csipler** (Symbiosis, Lino press)

Photos: **Gergő Gosztom, Attila Kleb, Csanád Kiss,**

Miklós Horváth, Zalán Biros, RZH

Producer: **Róbert Zoltán Hunka**

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