

JAZZ LINES PUBLICATIONS

Presents

LAURA

RECORDED BY FRANK SINATRA

ARRANGED BY AXEL STORDAHL

PREPARED BY ROB DUBOFF AND JEFFREY SULTANOF

FULL SCORE

JLP-9874

LYRICS BY JOHNNY MERCER

MUSIC BY DAVID RAKSIN

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LAURA (1947)

Background:

Francis Albert Sinatra was one of the greatest figures in the history of American entertainment and pop culture. Born December 12, 1915, in Hoboken, New Jersey, he developed an early interest in music, becoming proficient as a singer and arranging for bands by his teens. He soon dropped out of high school to pursue a career in music. Following the exposure resulting from a successful appearance on the then-popular Major Bowes Amateur Hour radio show, he came to the attention of Harry James, who hired him to front his big band. While he gained experience and released his first records with James, they did not sell well and he soon grew frustrated with the James band and left to join Tommy Dorsey, with whom he had his first huge successes. Seeing his popularity begin to skyrocket, Sinatra soon felt the need to become a solo artist, and left Dorsey, taking arranger Axel Stordahl with him; this would be the first of several very close relationships Sinatra would enjoy with arrangers over the years.

During the World War II era, he became a sensation, earning the nickname “The Voice” and gaining a following of young women that would presage the later crazes for Elvis and the Beatles. By 1946 he was topping the charts, selling millions of records, and also receiving serious acclaim for the quality and depth of his work. Tastes change however, and by the late 1940s he was suffering a significant decline in popularity. Exacerbated by the death of his publicist George Evans and the breakup of his marriage as the 1950s began, it was hard for many to believe how far Sinatra had sunk, but it would have been truly impossible to envision the future heights he would reach. By late 1951 his performances were often poorly attended, and Columbia, the label on which he became a superstar, dropped him.

Sinatra was also a successful actor, and he believed a part in the film *From Here to Eternity* would begin a career revival; it did, and remarkably so. The 1953 film was hugely popular and Sinatra won an Oscar for best supporting actor. He had also signed with Capitol Records, and began what was to be the most significant collaboration of his career with arranger Nelson Riddle. After the legendary first session, which included “I’ve Got the World on a String,” Sinatra was shocked at how well Riddle seemed to understand his abilities, ideas, and aspirations. Riddle knew how to treat dynamics beautifully, and how to craft an arrangement in order to allow the singer to clearly be the star while at the same time giving him rich, creative backing. They recorded a series of albums, including *In the Wee Small Hours*, *Songs For Swingin’ Lovers*, and *A Swingin’ Affair*, that both defined the genre and turned Sinatra into a massive superstar.

As the 1960s dawned, desiring more creative power and independence, Sinatra formed Reprise Records, which became another huge success for him, signing many other successful artists as well as being his recording home. He began working with other arrangers, hiring Don Costa, who had a great mind for commercial success in various genres. He also worked with the Count Basie Orchestra and Quincy Jones during this period, their greatest success and notoriety coming from the Rat Pack era appearances at the Sands Hotel in Las Vegas. During the rest of the sixties, Sinatra memorably recorded with Antonio Carlos Jobim and Duke Ellington, and he continued to be an eminent presence around the world, recording and touring for the next thirty years, while receiving endless honors and accolades.

While he became one of the most famous musicians in history, and certainly had a well-publicized and colorful personal life, much is not widely known about this brilliant and complex man. He never had formal music training, but was blessed with an incredible ear and innate musical understanding which often surprised musicians he worked with. His voice was incredibly powerful, his diction precise, and perhaps no popular singer has had a more unique gift for interpreting lyrics. Classical musicians marveled at his skills, and even his conducting ability surprised those who worked with him. His combination of rare musical gifts and perfectionism, as well as his insistence on working with the best writers and arrangers, fused to create an unmatched catalog of definitive versions of many of America’s greatest standards.

Sinatra had a temper, which he showed often to the world, and he could be profane, bullying, and gruff. But he also most definitely had a very serious different side as well. He was known for treating collaborators and musicians well, and was generous to a fault. Perhaps less-known is his tremendous charitable streak. Sinatra contributed generously, gave many benefit concerts, and often very quietly donated money to many causes. He was also politically active for his entire life, at first with the Democrats, and after the famous rift with JFK, the GOP. One of the most admirable parts of his character was his lifelong battle against racism. Growing up in a time and place where Italian-Americans were often heavily discriminated against, he quickly developed a visceral hatred for racism. He performed with African-American musicians during his entire career, he worshiped Billie Holiday and said that Ella Fitzgerald was the only singer he feared, and in a time when Las Vegas was much like the Jim Crow South, he fought for the rights of his close friends Sammy Davis Jr. and Count Basie and others.

Frank Sinatra passed away with his wife at his side in Los Angeles on May 14, 1998, at the age of 82. The outpouring of grief, respect, and tributes was tremendous for a figure whose only rivals among 20th century western musicians were Bing Crosby, Elvis Presley, and the Beatles. The 100th anniversary of his birth in 2015 saw countless concert tributes as well as documentaries and major new books. This is a man whose music will be listened to as long as the world continues to turn. The voice of Sinatra in his prime is peerless—powerful and comforting, historic and vibrant; he had the rare ability to make a newly-written song instantly his own, and to breathe new life into decades-old standards while creating their definitive expressions. Jazz Lines Publications is very proud to publish dozens of his best and most important original arrangements written by Nelson Riddle, Billy May, Neal Hefti, Quincy Jones, Billy Byers, and Don Costa.

The Sinatra - Stordahl Years:

The key word that comes to mind when discussing the arrangements that Axel Stordahl wrote for Frank Sinatra is “intimate.” The ballads that Sinatra sang in the 1940s were usually quite slow in tempo and through this setting he routinely demonstrated his uncanny ability to sound strong and emotional even when singing at a near-whisper dynamic. Stordahl created a chamber music accompaniment style for him relying heavily on strings and often featured flute and clarinet solos. As Sinatra rose to fame he was a major contrast to superstar Bing Crosby, who rarely sounded romantic and was older as well. The musical accompaniments framed Sinatra’s voice in an intimate setting, ultimately sounding sexy to his young listeners. Even though Sinatra was married, young women were obsessed with him; the combination of the romantic sounds of his voice and, background music helped to create a frenzy as he became a pop music icon.

Axel Stordahl had been a trumpet player and group singer in Bert Bloch’s Orchestra when in 1936 Dorsey heard and hired him. He subsequently became a staff arranger with the Dorsey Orchestra. His introduction to Frank Sinatra came in the 1940s when the young singer, having just left the Harry James Orchestra, was hired by Dorsey. In 1942 Sinatra and Stordahl recorded four sides for RCA’s budget label Bluebird which became instant classics. When Sinatra left the Dorsey organization in 1942 Stordahl went with him to become his musical director.

By the mid-1940s, Sinatra had become a one-man music industry, with recordings, movies, radio shows, and live appearances in auditoriums, concert halls, and supper clubs. Representatives from music publishers swamped him with new songs, and he needed as many good ones as he could get. Sinatra even started his own publishing company run by his friends Ben Barton and Hank Sanicola (Barton Music). His taste was unerring; he knew what worked for him and what didn’t. As a result, most of Sinatra’s output from his Columbia years is widely considered classic.

It is widely known that from 1943 to 1953 Axel Stordahl was Sinatra’s conductor and arranger. However, what hasn’t been widely understood is the extent to which he had assistance in the creation of arrangements. The concept of ‘ghost writing’ was commonplace at the time. The radio networks and television and movie studios had composers and arrangers on staff whose job it was to produce everything from film scores to incidental background music for announcer-read commercials. These on-staff arrangers were also available to help fill out a program of music needed for an upcoming performance. It’s no secret that as Sinatra became a major star in the 1940s he was performing on a near-daily basis. Due to the number of live dates Sinatra was involved in (concerts, radio, or television) it would have been very difficult for Stordahl to arrange new material to meet the demand. Hence, several ‘ghost writers’ were employed by the Sinatra organization to help quickly produce arrangements of popular songs of the day. Some of the people who contributed arrangements were Billy May, Bill Bunt, Neal Hefti, Earle Hagen, Bill Loose, John Hicks, Lowell Martin, and George Siravo. In fact, there are at least two instances of arrangements that were begun by one arranger and finished by another. The two such arrangements are *Don’t Fence Me In* (Lowell Martin and Billy May) and *The Brooklyn Bridge* (Bill Bunt and Axel Stordahl). Until now it was widely believed that Stordahl had written most if not all of these arrangements. Now, due to the availability of materials from Sinatra’s library, we are able to determine the actual arrangers of this historic music.

While Stordahl more often than not arranged the ballads, he was not as comfortable with swing and jazzy songs. These arranging assignments were often farmed out to ghost writers. The most well-known of Sinatra’s ghost writers was George Siravo, who played in Glenn Miller’s first and unsuccessful orchestra. During 1945, Siravo wrote for Charlie Barnet and contributed many arrangements of standard songs to Artie Shaw’s dance book. He would go on to arrange Sinatra’s one Columbia swing LP and an entire book of arrangements for club appearances in the early 1950s when Sinatra’s popularity had waned. To this day, all of Siravo’s work for Sinatra in the 1940s is erroneously credited to Stordahl. Siravo continued to write for Sinatra into the early 1960s. Another arranger who wrote a great deal for Sinatra during the mid-1940s was Lowell Martin. Martin had previously played trombone and arranged for Tommy Dorsey and Woody Herman (*Las Chiapanecas*). He also arranged for Capitol’s artists such as The Pied Pipers and the Starlighters. He is often mistaken for Lloyd ‘Skip’ Martin who also wrote and orchestrated for The Pied Pipers and worked for Sinatra in the early ‘60s.

Ken Lane wrote vocal arrangements and led choirs for Sinatra during this period. He is best known for being Dean Martin’s accompanist and was seen on Martin’s TV show every week. Lane had first worked with Martin at Paramount Pictures and is perhaps best known for having written the song *Everybody Loves Somebody*. This song was initially recorded by Sinatra but later became a bigger hit for Dean Martin in 1964.

Billy May re-located to the West Coast after leaving the Glenn Miller band in 1942, and joined Ozzie Nelson as a trumpet player/arranger. He was soon working for NBC radio and free-lancing. Years later, May spoke of writing for Sinatra during this period, but the breadth of his output remained unknown. Through our research of the music written for Sinatra during the Columbia years, we can finally attribute to him many of the arrangements he contributed. Of course, Frank and Billy would forge a strong musical bond at Capitol that lasted for many years.

Perhaps the biggest surprise (yet, a logical one) is discovering the name Earle Hagen among Sinatra's arrangers during the 1940s. Hagen arranged and recorded with the Starlighters and Tony Martin for Mercury Records in 1946, and regularly worked for Alfred Newman at 20th Century-Fox, arranging and orchestrating musicals for several years. With his partner Herbert Spencer, he had a company during the 1950s called MSI that supplied music for television, with Hagen composing and Spencer orchestrating. They also made several now-rare albums with an ensemble of free-lance musicians that was called The Spencer-Hagen Orchestra. After dissolving their partnership, Hagen wrote themes and background scoring for *The Danny Thomas Show*, *The Andy Griffith Show*, *The Dick Van Dyke Show*, *I Spy*, and many other TV shows. He was a respected teacher of film music, and his book *Scoring for Films* is still widely used. An excellent oral history of Hagen may be found at the Television Academy Foundation website at: <https://interviews.televisionacademy.com/interviews/earle-hagen#interview-clips>

Sinatra's story post-1950 is well-known. Listeners of pop music made novelty songs the hits of the day, and Sinatra had a harder time finding the kind of material that he was comfortable performing. Marital and voice problems plagued him, and his own TV show never really caught on, even though it was on for two years. A new producer at Columbia named Mitch Miller made things even worse by giving him terrible songs to record, and these records are the worst he ever made.

Capitol signed him to a contract when Columbia's contract expired, and Sinatra brought Stordahl with him once again. The Capitol executives loved Axel's music and signed him to his own contract, but thought that Sinatra should have a new musical direction. A recording session with Stordahl delivered nothing very new, so Sinatra was informed that Billy May would arrange the music for the next session. However, Billy May was unavailable at the time so Nelson Riddle was hired to ghost write. Riddle was well-known to Capitol Records as he had written several famous arrangements for Nat King Cole's recording sessions for the label including: *Mona Lisa*, *Too Young*, and *Unforgettable*. He contributed four arrangements: two in Billy May's style and two in his own style. He also conducted the music at the recording session. The rest is show business history, as Riddle and Sinatra became an unbeatable combination and recorded several classic albums that have never been out of print.

Stordahl would become Eddie Fisher's musical director, which did not sit well with Sinatra, and strained their once-close friendship. Stordahl had married June Hutton, lead singer of the Stardusters and the Pied Pipers, and made several recordings with her in subsequent years. Axel made one last album with Sinatra, ironically Sinatra's last album for Capitol, *Point of No Return*. Stordahl would compose the theme for the TV show *McHale's Navy* before he died of cancer in 1963.

Preparing for publication the arrangements written for Sinatra in the 1940s presents several challenges: often the music was cut or changed, copying errors in the parts were not always caught and corrected, and frequently introductions or endings were either re-written or created during the recording session. Many of these arrangements were written for Sinatra's radio appearances and were never officially recorded in the studio. Those that were later revisited in the recording studio frequently had music cut for time reasons or had other modifications made. We have opted to present the arrangements as-written with a narrative detailing any changes that were made to the original music. In addition, we indicate where a reference recording may be found; however, in some cases the only known performance comes from a radio broadcast not in commercial circulation.

While most Sinatra fans know and prefer the Capitol and Reprise albums, others have embraced his entire catalog, and know that the Columbia era established Frank Sinatra as a major star and one of the finest interpreters of popular songs who ever lived. We are proud to be able to publish the music written for Frank Sinatra during this time period, all from the original historic scores and parts.

The Music:

Recorded on October 22, 1947 this arrangement served as the backdrop for one of the greatest moments in recording history. Sinatra would later name the David Raksin song *Laura* as his favorite ballad - and his reading from this Columbia recording session serves as the definitive treatment. A distant modernist introduction hints at the melody before a brief ritard gives way to shimmering strings and the vocal entrance. As the harp gently arpeggiates chords, the horn in F provides a counter-melody answer to the vocal line. The rhythm section enters at measure 15 as the strings take center stage. The arrangement begins to build through the first chorus moving us to the eight-bar instrumental section arranged as a waltz. The previous half note becomes a dotted half (engraved in 6/4). The vocal re-enters as the arrangement returns to 4/4. The ending features shimmering strings again, this time sul ponticello. Simply put, this is one of the most iconic arrangements in the storied career of Frank Sinatra.

This publication has been based on Axel Stordahl's pencil score and the original set of parts used during the recording session - this is not a transcription.

Acknowledgements:

Thanks to an agreement with Frank Sinatra Enterprises, LLC, many of the classic arrangements written for Sinatra will be available from Jazz Lines Publications. As music fans who were greatly influenced by these magnificent arrangements, it is a great honor and thrill to work on these using the original manuscripts.

Doug DuBoff and Rob DuBoff

- June 2019

The score is written on ten systems of staves. The instruments listed on the left are: Flute 1, Flute 2 (with handwritten note 'col. Oct. A'), Sax's (Clarinets and Oboe), Bass Cl., Trumpets (4 staves), Trombones (4 staves), Horns, Vocal, Guitar, Drums, Harp, Violins (3 staves), Viola, Cello, Bass, and Piano. The music is in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first system shows the beginning of the piece with various melodic lines and accompaniment. The Trumpets part has four staves, each with a red letter (A, B, C, D) in the first measure. The Violins part has three staves, with the top staff containing a melodic line and the lower two staves providing accompaniment. The Piano part is written in grand staff notation. The score is handwritten in blue ink on aged paper.

Above is the first page of Axel Stordahl's score for *Laura*, recorded in 1947.

Handwritten musical score for violin, showing measures 11 through 35. The score is written on a grand staff with treble and bass clefs. It includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, slurs, and dynamic markings like "pp" and "ff". A section starting at measure 27 is labeled "WALTZ" and features a 4/4 time signature. The page is numbered "2" in the top right corner.

Above is the second page of the violin part. Notice that the instrumental waltz section was originally written in 4/4. Note how the violinists divided the bars during this section for ease of reading.

LAURA

RECORDED BY FRANK SINATRA

LYRICS BY JOHNNY MERCER

MUSIC BY DAVID RAKSIN

ARRANGED BY AXEL STORDAHL

PREPARED BY ROB DUBOFF AND JEFFREY SULTANOF

SCORE

FREELY, IN 2 ♩ = 100

IN 4

RT.

Score for Laura, featuring various instruments and a vocal line. The score is divided into measures 2 through 6.

Vocal: -

Woodwind 1: Clarinet: *pp*, *cresc.*, *mf*, *sfz*

Woodwind 2: Flute: *pp*, *cresc.*, *mf*, *sfz*

Woodwind 3: Clarinet/Flute: *pp*, *cresc.*, *mf*, *sfz*

Woodwind 4: Oboe/Clarinet: *pp*, *cresc.*, *mf*, *sfz*

Woodwind 5: Bass Clarinet: *pp*, *cresc.*, *mf*, *sfz*

Horn in F: -

Violin I: *p*, *cresc.*, *mp*, *mfp*, *mf*, *p*

Violin II: *p*, *cresc.*, *mp*, *mfp*, *mf*, *p*

Violin III: *p*, *cresc.*, *mp*, *mfp*, *mf*, *p*

Viola: *pp*, *cresc.*, *p*, *mfp*, *mf*, *p*

Cello: *pp*, *cresc.*, *p*, *mfp*, *mf*, *p*

Harp: E^b F[#] G[#] A^b
D[#] C^b B^b

Guitar: -

Celeste/Piano: -

Double Bass: *pp*, *cresc.*, *p*, *sfz*

Drum Set: -

Annotations: "Clarinet" (Woodwind 3), "Oboe" (Woodwind 4), "Celeste" (Guitar), "To Flute" (Woodwind 2)

2

3

4

5

6

7 A TEMPO, SLOWER ♩ = 75

Vox. Lau - ra is the face in the mist - y light, foot - steps that you hear down the hall.

Ww. 1 (Cl.)

Ww. 2 (Fl.)

Ww. 3 (Fl.)

Ww. 4 (Ob.)

Ww. 5 (Bs. Cl.)

Hn.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vln. III

Vla.

Vc. unis. pizz. arco

Hp.

Cel.

D.B.

To Piano

7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14