Gene Lees
Jazzletter

P.O. Box 240
Ojai, Calif.
93023

June 1985

Vol. 4 No. 11

Year's End

With the next issue, which is in the works, the *Jazzletter* will have completed its fourth year. I cannot adequately express my gratitude for all the kind things that have been said about it, and for the opportunity you have given me to write with freedom and to allow others to do the same. I am particularly proud of the writing by others that has appeared in this forum in the forty-seven issues to date.

I owe some specific debts that I would like to acknowledge. I thank Frank Tack of Los Angeles and David Logan of Chicago, two wonderfully kind men whose contributions kept the *Jazzletter* alive at critical junctures. It also has had help from Robert Farnon, Dr. Carroll Bellis, Don Chastain, Bud Plumb, Rachel Elkind, Henry Mancini, Lyn Murray, Rod McKuen, Bud Shank, Terry Rogers, the late Shelly Manne, and more — including a good many people who voluntarily overpaid their subscriptions last year.

I am particularly grateful to Carl Jefferson of Concord Records, Charlie Lourie of Mosaic, Gene Norman of Crescendo and George Buck Jr. of Audiophile for help and support. Jazz, and indeed good music of all kinds, is kept alive by the independent record labels, not the majors. I am planning a series of portraits of these companies and the people who created them. They are the guardians of our musical heritage.

I owe deep thanks to Ira Sabin and Mike Joyce, publisher and editor respectively of *Jazz Times*; Jim Williams of the International Association of Jazz Record Collectors *Journal*; Willard Jenkins of Arts Midwest; Lynn Darroch, editor of *Jazz Scene*, the journal of the Oregon Jazz Society; Jim Eigo of Daybreak Express; James Lincoln Collier; and on the far side of the pond, Max Harrison, Max Jones, Tony Russell, and Peter Clayton.

I thank all the people who have given gift subscriptions, both to individuals and institutions. Steve Allen is the reigning champion. I have lost track of how many subscriptions Steve has given to friends.

That's the good news. Here's the bad news. Your resubscriptions are now due. I'm still going to hold it to $30 a year in U.S funds for the United States and Canada, and $20 for gift subscriptions, despite increases in postage and other costs. For some people, particularly students and retired people, that's a lot. If, however, you can afford more, please send it, as many people did last year. And if you can't afford that much, let me know, and the *Jazzletter* will be sent free.

Overseas mail presents a problem. It now costs a walloping $1.12 to send an issue of the *Jazzletter* to Europe by air mail, and more to other parts of the world. If you don't mind it being sent by surface mail, we'll hold it to $35. If you want it sent air mail, make it $40 to Europe and $45 to other countries.

Christmas will soon be upon us. I hope you will consider subscriptions to the *Jazzletter* for gifts. And if you want to give the Sarah Vaughan album as a Christmas gift, we'll include the four issues of the *Jazzletter* describing how it came to be made.

That's it. If everybody would resubscribe now, it would obviate a lot of book-keeping and get Year Five off to a flying start.

A Journey to Cologne

Part IV

Those last weeks in Milan, leading toward a concert I did not in my heart believe would ever actually occur — the whole thing was too wildly improbable, even to me — passed in a blur. Gigi has a taste for working with women; even his lawyer is a woman. And for the Pope Project, as we had all come to call it, he had assembled a singular group of them, all attractive, briskly competent, and very intelligent. One of them was Verena Baldeo, a tall slim Austrian of Hungarian ancestry, a motion-picture unit production manager based in Rome, just back from a job in Tunisia and set to leave right after the concert date for a big film in the Soviet Union. Another was Ilia Ferrari, a trim, small, pretty woman with a thorough knowledge of music publishing — she had worked for years for Ricordi, the Italian publisher known chiefly for its opera scores. Still another was Marina Quaresimin, Gigi's almost emaciated and very pretty chain-smoking young secretary from Turin who spoke a variant of English all her own. Verena is athletic, and cavalier in her attitude to clothes; Ilia and Marina very stylish in the Italian manner. After Geneva, Milan was a feast for the eyes. So many of its people, men and women alike, of whatever age, are arrestingly good-looking, and well-dressed.

Gigi is half-owner of a restaurant called Ai Ballos, a name I was told is untranslatable Milanese slang. The other owner is a prosperous printer, a communist to whom Gigi says the most corrosive things you can imagine. Why they are partners mystifies me, in view of Gigi's socialist hostility to communism. In spite of this, however, when Enrique Belinguer, the head of the Italian Communist Party, died, Gigi got a hint of tears in his eyes. They had been friends in youth. "But he was a puritan," Gigi said. "He could never appreciate a beautiful woman." Gigi explained to me that Belinguer and the Italian communists had supported the emplacement of NATO missiles in Sicily because of their distrust of the Soviet Union.

The floor above Ai Ballos is a pension of eight rooms, small and undecorated but comfortable and clean. Gigi installed Verena and me there, the only tenants at the time. My room looked out on a great courtyard surrounded by apartment buildings. I came to recognize some of the women of these buildings as they opened their windows in the mornings, and even some of the neighborhood cats as they proceeded on their

rounds. I loved the textures of the light falling on balconies and on bedding hung out to air. I learned to use the streetcar system, instead of taking taxis; or I would walk to Gigi's office each day, to feel myself a part of the city's life.

Ai Ballos is one of the finest restaurants I have ever encountered, anywhere, and Verena and I had free run of the place. We would sit there of evenings amid its bright linens and shining glassware and she would ask me about American politics, and I would ask her about those of Europe. All Gigi's friends are of a color, compassionate and concerned for humanity.

We worked frantically in preparation for the concert. Gigi planned an elaborate twenty-page trilingual printed program, which it fell to my lot more or less to write, biographies of the people involved which were then translated into Italian and German. And Gigi asked me to deal with the press, working with Ilia Ferrari. A storm of publicity began to turn around us as articles appeared in Italian and German newspapers and we got phone calls from as far away as Tokyo. Even one of the communist papers, intensely anticlerical, praised the project as a positive statement for peace. Explaining to reporters my own role in this undertaking, I gradually became irritated by a recurring question: "Have you met the Pope?"

At lunchtime everything halted. Gigi would send Verena out for gourmet food that we would consume in the kitchen at one end of his suite of offices, looking out on the rooftops of Milan. Or we would repair to a restaurant called the Mercante in a nearby square one of whose buildings dated from the Fourteenth Century. I thought the Mercante was as good as Ai Ballos. Its professionally solicitous owner looked like a round and shorter version of Henry Mancini — no doubt one of Hank's distant tribal relatives. The Mercante for lunch and Ai Ballos for dinner, an Italian ritual of pleasure for which I found I had a ready affinity.

And then we got some ominous news. Sarah Vaughan had not received the music. And she was about to leave for a series of concerts before meeting us in Germany. No one could learn those songs quickly; they were as difficult as operatic arias, and more so than most. Sass needed lead time. Gigi called Sahib Shihab in Copenhagen. Sahib assured him that lead sheets had been sent. Then we learned that Lalo Schifrin hadn't received the scores, even though we had received some of them in Milan. And all the while I nursed a secret worry. I had taken down the keys to the songs over the telephone from Sass, writing them on a scrap of paper in the poor light of an unwindowed hallway in Francy's daughter's apartment. What if I had gotten them wrong? If I had, we faced a disaster. Gigi would lose several hundred thousand dollars in one night, and it would be my fault. I did not let him in on my secret fear; he had enough to worry about.

One of his writer friends translated the program notes into Italian. For the German translations, Gigi flew in a writer and broadcaster from Cologne named Manfred Miller, a delightfully humorous and sensitive man. Plans solidified for presentation of the concert at the Tonhalle, a concert hall in Dusseldorf noted for its acoustics. Gigi had hired a complete string orchestra from Cologne. In the meantime, one by one, the jazz players had confirmed the dates, including some friends I had not seen in years, such as Ed Thigpen and Art Farmer. I had recommended Mike Renzi for piano but Mike told us at the last minute that he couldn't get out of a previous contract. We called Bobby Scott in New York, and he agreed to play piano on the session. And what if I'd taken the keys down wrong? I tried to put the thought out of my mind, proof-reading the type for the program. At last my wife arrived at Linate Airport. She was as startled as I had been, she told me later, by the machine guns and dogs.

Janet had never been to Italy. She was as enthralled by it as I was. We began to be aware of a warm pro-Americanism among the people. Nor was this the affectation of shop-keepers anxious for the tourist dollar. Ai Ballos is in a working neighborhood, not a tourist area. At the end of the day, Janet and I would go to a little outdoor cafe to sip Campari or white wine. The place had its regulars, whom we came to recognize and who came to recognize us. Gradually they tried to include us in their conversations, and soon we were part of that little company. One day we went window-shopping, near those canals that Hemingway mentions in one of the early stories. A stooped and very old woman paused and smiled at us and said to Janet, "La donna e molta bella." By now I could understand that: the lady is very beautiful. It was a strangely touching moment.

We asked Verena about attitudes, since her work took her all over Europe. She told us that in her business, movies, and in most businesses, Americans are respected for craftsmanship, intelligence, and professionalism. It was her dream to work in Hollywood for a year. All our experience during those weeks in Europe confirmed the high regard in which Americans are held, even though emigration to the United States has slowed to a trickle, now that the standard of living of Europe surpasses that of America.

On weekends we all repaired to the house at Cazzago for what was in essence a party. June began to slip away and Sass still hadn't received the music. Nor had Lalo.

At last our work in Milan was done. The program was printed and shipped to Germany, and Gigi prepared to follow it. He said there was no point in my going to Germany immediately. I would not be needed until Sass arrived the following week. He handed me the keys to a car and the house at Cazzago, and left with Verena and Marina. Country roads that a few months ago had been strange to me were by now friendly and familiar, and Janet and I spent a lazy week exploring the city of Varese and the villages of Lombardy, including Gallarate. I looked at its little streets and imagined the blackshirts dragging Gigi's father over its cobbles, these very stones.

Of all his aversions, nothing comes close to Gigi's hatred of fascism. "Everyone forgets," he said to me one day, "that the political right became popular not only in Germany. There was a great support for fascism in Belgium and Holland. We have tried fascism in Europe, and we know it doesn't work. But the United States has not, and that is why you keep flirting with it."

The days at Cazzago passed idyllically, and then it came time for us to join Gigi in Dusseldorf. We took the train through Switzerland and up the Rhine valley, past Remagen, where Luther Hodges' men found that the Germans inexplicably had not blown the bridge. They telephoned Patton at his headquarters and asked him what to do, and he said, "Cross it!" and Allied forces made their first penetration into the heartland of Germany. We passed the great cathedral at Cologne, its twin spires rising high in the evening above the city built on the rubble created by, no doubt, some of those blue-uniformed

boys who used to hitch-hike past the Brant Inn. Gigi met the train.

On the evening of his departure from California, Lalo Schifrin at last received the scores. He upgraded his plane ticket to first class so that he would have room to spread them out and study them. He and Donna, his wife, and their son Ryan arrived in Germany on June 21, Lalo's birthday. He immediately made a pilgrimage to Beethoven's home in nearby Bonn.

Lalo and Donna were lodged in downtown Dusseldorf at the Steinbergen Park, an elegant hotel of the old school that somehow had survived the bombing. Gigi and the rest of us, due to lack of accomodations near the Tonhalle, were at a sterile commercial Novotel in Neuss, a small town just outside Dusseldorf founded by the Romans and celebrating its two thousandth anniversary. It was far from the concert hall, far from the restaurants, far from the action. Gigi took one look at it and said, "The cats ain't gonna like this." And the cats began to arrive, Tony Coe and Chris Lawrence and Rick Kiefer and Jiggs Whigham from England, Gianni Basso from Italy, Jimmy Woode from Switzerland, Shihab and Ed Thigpen from Denmark, Sal Nistico from Bonn, Art Farmer from Austria, the Van Lier brothers from Holland, Sadi from Belgium, Rolf Ericson from Sweden, Benny Bailey down from Hamburg, Bobby Scott from New York, tall and thin and very distinguished now with hair and beard almost white, and of course Francy up from Geneva. As the Mercedes-Benz taxis pulled up one after another and discharged these remarkable passengers, some of the finest musicians on this planet, I began to feel the scope of the project. What a band! And what if I'd got the keys wrong?

And everywhere there was Paolo, Paolo Campi, Gigi's tall and handsome son, named for the grandfather beaten by the blackshirts. Paolo did everything. He co-ordinated the fleet of taxis between the Novotel and the Tonhalle. He translated for us. He was indispensable. Twenty-seven years old at the time, Paolo runs a successful bar and restaurant in the huge high-ceilinged basement of what was once the Cologne railway station. It is across a plaza from the great cathedral — a matter of perhaps two hundred yards away. Allied airmen were under orders to destroy that station but leave the cathedral standing. They did it. You have to walk around that plaza to appreciate the precision the boys from the Royal Texas Air force and their ilk had achieved. They sheared that station off at street level, as with a scythe. All that remains is the cavernous basement which, with a new roof, houses Paolo Campi's thriving business. The cathedral suffered only a little scarring from bomb fragments.

The time for the first rehearsal arrived. We went in our fleet of cars to the Tonhalle. It is high-domed and circular, the shape of an orange juicer, a beautiful modern brick building built on a base of gray stone blocks, the remnant of some Wagnerian edifice erected in Hitler's time and taken out by the bombers. It is on the riverfront. From the stage entrance at the rear you look out across the Rhine, of whose dirty waters even the Romans complained. Since Sarah Vaughan had not arrived yet, Lalo decided first to rehearse the instrumental sections of the suite. He stood on the podium, baton in hand, and gave a tempo. The first thing I heard was Shihab, soloing on soprano saxophone on the release of *The Mystery of Man*. I had known Lalo since he joined Dizzy Gillespie's quintet, the same week I joined *Down Beat* in 1959. My son Phil arrived from Paris. I introduced him, or rather reintroduced him, to Ed Thigpen. When Phil was two or three, Ed, staying with us in our apartment in Chicago, would, with the strength in those drummer's arms, pick him up with one hand and hold him high in the air, letting him giggle helplessly. Lalo too used to come to that apartment. He showed me Jobim's *Desafinado* on my little Wurlitzer electric piano there. It was my introduction to Jobim's music. So many things were coming together on that stage in Dusseldorf.

At last Sarah Vaughan was to arrive. Gigi and I went to the airport. A number of newspaper reporters and photographers had gathered. They interviewed Gigi and me as they waited for her. "Have you met the Pope?" one of them asked me. I stood by the glass wall that kept us out of the baggage area. At last I saw Sass and Harry Adesso, her manager, both of them looking tired from the long flight. I waved. Her face lit up. At last she and Harry cleared customs and emerged. One of the reporters asked her, "Have you met the Pope?"

"No," she said sweetly in that little girl's voice her friends know so well. "But I'd like to."

"And what do you think of Dusseldorf?" the reporter asked. "I just got here," she said. She answered some more questions of that kind, then said to me, "Gene! Where's the music? I've got to see some music! I'm going crazy, I haven't seen any music!"

"Here," I said, handing her a big envelope.

"Oh!" she said, kissing it. "At last!" She hugged it to her. We got into a limousine, her luggage following in another car, and headed to the hotel. She had three days to learn the songs. And what if the keys were wrong?

After she checked into the hotel, we went by taxi to the Tonhalle, about half a mile away. Lalo grinned broadly as she walked onstage. She waved to old friends in the jazz side of the orchestra as the Europeans on Lalo's left applauded her.

I can't remember where it happened. The moment was so ghastly that it is outside place or atmosphere or time. I don't know whether it was at the Tonhalle or the hotel or where. Music in hand, Sass said, "Gene, these keys are wrong." I did not say, "That can't be." I knew it could. Had we been in the United States, I would have known what to do. In California, I would have gotten on the phone and called Billy Byers and Albert Harris and maybe Jack Hayes and a team of copyists and whomever else they all said we needed and the stuff would be transposed overnight, with any necessary revision of the voicings accomplished in the process. In New York, I'd have called Larry Wilcox and Emile Charlap and cried, "Help!" But in Europe? In Germany? Where they do things just so, in order to have *ordnung*? You do not improvise, you do things by the book. *Ordnung, ordnung.*

I remember Shihab was standing by. He, not I, said, "That can't be." He'd worked with her in the past and knew her registers. He looked at the music. "It's too low," she said.

"You do it up an octave," he said.

"Can I get it written out that way?" she said. I had encountered this kind of precision in another singer, years before, one with absolute pitch. If the note on the paper was B-flat, it was B-flat. She could not transpose at sight. "Sure," Shihab said. And I came back from what felt like the brink of the grave.

All that afternoon Lalo rehearsed the orchestra, as Sass sat on the stage and studied the songs. Back in an impromptu control room, a dressing room at the end of a long trail of black

electric cables, Wolfgang Hirschmann the engineer, hero of the Clarke-Boland albums, sat with Francy and Nat Peck, recording the proceedings. At the end of the session, Sass and I said we needed a cassette player and a tape of what had been recorded. Stores were already closed. But somewhere Paolo Campi managed to buy a cassette player, and had a tape of the rehearsal prepared for us.

Next morning I arrived at Sass's hotel suite. We played the tape and I sang the songs for her, enthralled by Francy's charts. I had seen her sight-read before. Roger Kellaway and I wrote a song called *The Days Have No Names* for the score to a bad little NBC movie-of-the-week called *Sharon: Portrait of a Mistress*. It is a difficult song, but Sass had been the singer. She walked into the studio and sight-read it with ease. These songs were much more difficult, and she had six of them to learn.

Fortunately two others were to be performed by Benard Ighner and a choral group from England. Francy was rehearsing them back at the Novotel.

A singer under such pressure is operating at two levels. She, or he, is not merely reading music. She is also reading words and trying to understand their meaning. She is reading two things simultaneously and trying to fit them together, two languages really, facing problems much more complex than those of a trumpet player reading a single line in an arrangement. Until you have memorized a song and can do it without conscious thought, the way one rides a bicycle, you cannot be at ease with it, cannot descend into the interpretation of it. Nor are you a detail in the background scenery; you *are* the show.

We worked all morning on the material, then went over to the Tonhalle to rehearse with Lalo and the orchestra. It was then that I discovered that there would not be a separate recording session following the concert. In theory, we were supposed to be recording now. I was horrified. I said to Gigi, "We've got to track this stuff without voice. If it's a mess, she can overdub later!"

Gigi said that it was not necessary, and that she needed the rehearsal time with the orchestra. "How much separation are we going to have?" I wanted to know. She was rehearsing with microphone. Surely the sound of her voice on the loudspeakers was entering the string and piano mikes. "There will be plenty of separation," Gigi said. I was doubtful. Bobby Scott had told me about a device that will remove the vocal from even a phonograph record; perhaps Wolfgang Hirschmann had some arcane way to cancel given frequencies and eliminate leakage. In any case, Sass and I were too busy to worry about it. We proceeded on into what Francy, a year later, in a funny letter to me, called "l'enfer de Dusseldorf" — the hell of Dusseldorf. We sat side by side on two chairs on the stage, to Lalo's right. We went through *The Madeleine*. Francy had written, at my suggestion, a completely rubato chart. Lalo had to conduct to her; there could be no winging one's way through the changes on this one.

Sass was pouring every ounce of her talent, intelligence, experience and concentration into the songs. I was the only person in the world who knew them, knew the little nuts and bolts and wheels inside them. And for that reason, Sass would not let me stray far. I sat at her left throughout that long afternoon. We were frightened, and in the fire of that fear some sort of bonding occurred while my admiration for her kept on growing.

The camera crews aggravated our problems. They were not flexible, like our crews, and nowhere near as good. The myth of German efficiency and technical excellence was dying before my eyes. I have done quite a bit of television, both as writer and singer, and I know how Canadian and American crews work, their creativity and improvisational flare. There was none of that here. One camera was mounted on the floor just below the stage, to stare up at Sarah. We got a complaint that the music covered her face. Donna Schifrin, Lalo's wife, who is tall, beautiful, dark and with high cheek bones bequeathed by her Cherokee forefathers, has a dry Oklahoma way of expression. She said to Janet, "That camera's got wheels on it. Why don't they move it?" But no, this was the shot had been plotted in advance, and this was the way it would be.

"Can't you do something about those lights?" Sass protested.

No, she was told, the camera crews too had to rehearse and they needed the lights. Ordnung. Sweat seeped into her eyes. If she's unable to master these songs, I thought, there isn't going to be anything worth shooting.

When the orchestra dispersed that afternoon, Sass said she needed a piano in her room. Paolo found her a Fender-Rhodes somewhere, a rattle-keyed but serviceable nightclub instrument. She sat up late into the night, working on the songs. At 9:30 I joined her for breakfast in her suite. She was eating lightly, a little fruit; she was trying to lose weight. And we went over the songs again, and again, and again, singing them together. I might be teaching her the songs but she was giving me a spectacular master class in what singing is all about.

The phone rang. I took the call. The public relations director of the hotel asked if Miss Vaughan would do some newspaper interviews. I discussed the question with Sass. Her answer was no. And I agreed with it. But I went to the p.r. office, for the sake of politeness, to deliver it, explaining that we just didn't have time for interviews. Would Miss Vaughan let them take some pictures on her way to rehearsal? Sass agreed at least to that. We went back to work. As we left for the Tonhalle, she paused for pictures.

Sass told me, sometime during those days in Dusseldorf, that there had been an effort to type-cast her, in her early career, as a blues singer. "And I am *not* and never have been a blues singer," she said. And she isn't. I don't think I have ever heard Sarah Vaughan sing a blues. But she *is* a gospel singer. There is a great deal of the church in her work, as I was to discover.

We arrived at the Tonhalle for the afternoon's rehearsal. The television show was being directed by a Spanish director, Jose Montes Baquer, who has won many awards for his German TV work. But he, and these crews, were used to working with classical music, not with new music and jazz people. Someone complained that she was still holding sheet music in front of her. Of course she was! The woman was rehearsing and learning *the music*!

Notice

The *Jazzletter* is published 12 times a year at Ojai, California, 93023, and distributed by first class mail to the United States and Canada and by air mail to other countries. Subscriptions are $30 a year in U.S. currency to the United States and Canada, $35 to other countries. Subscribers can purchase gift subscriptions for $20 U.S., $25 to other countries.

"Get her a teleprompter, damn it!" I finally said.

I do not remember who answered me. I remember only the icy superiority of the tone. "We do not use teleprompters in Germany." ("We" again.) Yes, and you can see it in the amateur quality of so much of their television.

Then they complained that the lights were glinting off her glasses. Wonderful. Let's make it impossible altogether for her to read. And they asked her to work closer to the front of the stage. "But I won't be able to see Lalo there," she said. "I have to see Lalo."

There was one particularly difficult passage, in *The Armaments Worker*, I think it was, that was giving her a lot of trouble. Frustrated, Shihab — who knew every note of those scores, having copied them — tried to show her how it went. Lalo tried singing it for her. But the problem was not entirely a musical one: it had a verbal and interpretive dimension comprehensible only to a singer. At last she nailed it, and we both grinned. "There!" she said triumphantly.

Later, in the tavern of the Novotel, I remarked to Art Farmer and the others, "What she's trying to do ain't exactly two choruses of *Dinah*."

One evening in that tavern, Gigi reminisced about the three albums made by Francy Boland and the band without Klook. During a week of recording in Cologne, several of the musicians kept coming to Gigi for money. He found out why. Upstairs at the Cafe Campi, they had been playing poker with Frank Rosolino, and Frank was taking them all to the cleaners. Gigi described him laughing and doing a little dance, singing, "*Grazie mille, grazie mille*," a thousand thanks — a folk song almost forgotten in Italy but apparently still known in America. We all laughed, remembering Frank, and then some of the faces clouded as we mused on how he ended, a suicide, like Ake Persson whom he had replaced. As for the Cafe Campi, it had, like London House in Chicago, long since become a Burger King.

We spent a lot of time in the evenings at the tavern in the Novotel; there was nothing much else to do in Neuss, out on the edge of Dusseldorf, a clean and sterile community mostly of new buildings. Everywhere we had gone I had been taken by the newness of things. You hardly ever encounter an old building in Dusseldorf. Only a few cities, such as Heidelberg, had escaped the almost total destruction.

A man in that tavern struck up a conversation with me. He said he was a Canadian now but he had been born here in Neuss. I asked him about the bombing, expressing my horror. He misinterpreted it. He said, in his slightly-accented English, "Yes, I never see a school or a park named after Winston Churchill that I don't want to vomit." So much for German regret.

I was well aware of the wanton destruction of Dresden in the phosophorous and high-explosive bombing of February 15, 1945. It was a virtual museum of baroque architecture, one of the most beautiful cities of the world. It had no military value and it was crowded with refugees on that night, particularly old people and women and children. Some historians say that Churchill ordered its obliteration as a sobering demonstration to the approaching Russians of Allied air power. Whatever the reason for the attack, the destruction of Dresden stands as one of the atrocities of World War II. Yet, after Rotterdam and Warsaw and Coventry and Belsen, which I visited once, and Dachau and Treblinka and . . . "You started it. We finished it," I said and walked away.

My son Phil was sharing our hotel suite, which was on the second floor, overlooking the parking lot. One night some German businessmen, who had been drinking heavily in the bar earlier, were bidding their good nights before getting into cars. And suddenly we saw them snap up their arms in the Nazi salute and declare, "Heil Hitler!" Phil had worked for some time in rock and rhythm-and-blues groups in Los Angeles and he has a way of speaking American ghetto slang with a French accent. He shouted a pungent example of it out the window at them.

And the next morning and afternoon Sass and I worked on the songs. They were beginning to take shape now, the melodies coming to soaring life in that great glorious voice of hers. Nonetheless, we were far from having this music truly together. Every once in a while — when, for example, the "classical" orchestra was having difficulties over a phrase with some hint of jazz inflection — Lalo would look at me, sitting there on the stage beside Sass, and raise his eyebrows ever so slightly in an expression that said, "We are in deep trouble." My admiration for him grew and grew. He is not only a superb composer but, I realized, has developed into a superior conductor, in which direction his career seems to be taking him. He was the very soul of patience, control and professionalism during those difficult days.

I had several serious altercations with Gigi. I thought I was coming to hate him. A year later I realized that, on the contrary, I was coming to love him. "The cat's creative," Shihab said, when we were reminiscing about those days. "Nobody else comes up with projects like that." But in the tension of the time, we clashed constantly.

And then we ran out of time. Ready or not, the day of the concert was upon us. We held a final press conference during which Gigi and I and Lalo answered questions about the project. One of the reporters asked if any of us had met the Pope.

There was a last dress rehearsal that afternoon, Saturday, June 30, 1984. I had come to perceive that at the heart of the magnificent talent that is Sarah Vaughan there is a very young girl. And that girl would soon be absolutely alone. When she hit that stage tonight, there would nothing that I or anyone else could do to help her.

The musicians took a long break for dinner. Then in their tuxedoes they emerged from the Novotel to climb into the hired cars which, one by one, pulled out for the Tonhalle. I remained with Sass in her suite at the Steinbergen Park Hotel. In another room of the hotel, as he donned his own tuxedo, Lalo said gloomily to Donna, "I have been in difficult situations, but not like this."

With Harry Adesso — a tall, good-looking man who rather reminds me of the actor Harry Guardino — I escorted Sass to the concert. The audience and the orchestra assembled. Lalo raised a baton. Benard Ighner, tall and erect and very handsome, sang his song *Everything Must Change*. I looked at the program book we had put together in Milan, whose cover read: *Sarah Vaughan Sings John Paul II, 'One World One Peace'*. For a day or two, Francy and I had been calling it One World in Pieces. Then Lalo and the orchestra performed a Mozart work which he had programmed in place of a contemporary composition that would have cost precious rehearsal time. In the row in front of me, Sante Palumbo and Tito Fontana listened in rapture. Tito leaned over the back of his seat and said to me, "I never thought I would live to hear

Sarah Vaughan sing my music."

Benard Ighner returned to the stage along with the choral group from England. Lalo raised the baton again. The chorus began *a capella*. The high strings joined them. Benard sang *The Mystery of Man*. Then Sass came out, resplendent in a gown of bright salmon-colored chiffon, the breast shining silver with a pattern of payettes. I held my breath. Still looking at her music, and camera crews be damned, she sang *The Actor*, and sang it exquisitely. She went on to *Girl Disappointed in Love*. I got up and walked to the back of the auditorium. She got through that one too. During the next instrumental interlude, I went out to the bar. I couldn't bear to be in there watching her; I couldn't bear to be out here not watching her, either. I went back into the hall. She was singing *The Madeleine*. I felt as if I were watching through a powerful telescope a far-away friend skiing down a dangerous mountain slope whose every twist, rock, tree and precipice I knew only too well. *Go, lady, go*, I was thinking as she made her way through the curves of those songs. The chorus from England sang the first half of *The Black*. Francy and I had designed it that way, so that it would be what it was meant to be, a white statement of brotherhood rather than a black statement of racism, and Benard replied to them in its latter half. Sass went into *The Children* and *The Armaments Worker*. Once or twice she stumbled, but with those incredible ears of hers, she recovered, and did a swift skate through the changes until she was out of trouble.

The worst was over. The remaining song was *Let It Live*, the song I had written with Lalo to close the concert. This was home terrain to her, a gospel song. You could sense her relief. Bobby Scott played some wonderful gospel piano behind her. And then it was over. Or almost. The audience roared applause. Gigi brought us all onstage, Sante and Tito and me in tuxes, and Francy, who had been working with Hirschmann and Nat Peck in the control room, in a red shirt and a camel-colored suede windbreaker. Still the audience applauded. No encore had been prepared. So Sass sang *Let It Live* again. And the audience demanded that she do it again. She sang it a third time. The lyrics were printed in the program and this time the audience sang it with her.

At last they let her go, and themselves dispersed. Backstage, the musicians congratulated her. Tito, glowing, expressed his admiration in his uncertain English. "Unbelievable," I told her. "Just unbelievable."

She gave a saucy toss of her head and grinned, as if to say, "Oh, it was nothing," and then said in a conspiratorial half-whisper to Janet and me, "Let's get outta here, I'm starved." So was I. We had eaten nothing before the concert. She changed into jeans and an old shirt and we left, just the three of us.

On the night of Lalo's arrival and birthdate, Gigi had given a little party at an excellent Hungarian restaurant that I thought I could find again. It was in what the people of Dusseldorf are pleased to call the Old Town, though there is nothing old about it. The architecture is traditional but all the buildings are postwar, and the area looks like a Disney simulation of German streets. We got into the car Gigi had hired for her, a Jaguar, and told the driver, Willie, where to go. As the car approached Old Town, crowds of drunken revelers brought it to a halt. A huge bull of a woman loomed up in front of it, her stance unsteady, her eyes glazed, her mouth in a snarl. "Let me outta here, I'll *kill* her!" Sass said, venting in one phrase all the fear and tension of these last days. Thus began one of those hours when even the most trivial incongruity or witticism sets off another round of helpless laughter.

We walked through the streets of the Old Town, from which automobiles are barred. The crushing Saturday night crowds were drunk and dangerous. You could feel the violence that seethed below the surface. Sass walked between Janet and me, and the sullen faces told us all we wanted to know about what these young Teutons thought of the black lady on their street. Three of them blocked our path. Janet slapped one of them on

Photo by Mitchell Seidel

the arm, saying, "Get out of our way!" Surprisingly, they did. I learned later that this atmosphere is common in Germany on Saturday nights. Gigi told me, "They do not tell you in the books, but on Kristalnacht . . ." the Night of Broken Glass, when Hitler's punks poured through the streets smashing the windows of Jewish shops and homes and dragging out the proprietors and residents to beat them senseless or to death ". . . those people were all drunk."

We found the restaurant without further incident and consumed among other things a goulash soup that made your eyes water. We laughed and laughed at I know not what. Sass said the songs had been wonderful, the musicians had been wonderful, Lalo had been wonderful.

"The singer wasn't bad either," I said, and we laughed some more. We laughed until our weariness overcame us and we decided it was time for some sleep. Then, just as we were about to leave, the owners of the place, both Hungarian, came out to introduce themselves. They had recognized her when we arrived. And they brought her a little cake, on the top of which was a tiny American flag. The three of us were very touched. At last I paid the check and we headed for the door. As we passed a private dining room, Gigi yelled, "Sarah! Gene! Janet!" And there he was, with a gang of our people, including Paolo. They insisted we stop long enough for a glass of wine.

A quartet of Hungarian violinists entered the room and stood around us, playing to Sass — I think they too recognized her. Or else the owners had sent them to serenade her. They were superb players, virtuosi in their idiom, and she was, as I was, flabbergasted by their musicianship. When they had gone, Gigi said, "And you know, they work for almost nothing."

It was one of the best straight lines I ever heard, and I could not resist it. "Most of us," I said, "do." I thought Sass would strangle with laughter.The next day Gigi paid all the musicians in an impromptu office in the basement of the Novotel and the remarkable orchestra he had created for this one project ceased to exist as Art and Ed and all the rest bade farewells in the lobby and left. Janet and I were planning to go to Paris the next day. My son Phil said he was leaving now. "Wait, we'll come with you tomorrow," I said.

"No way, I'm getting out of here now. I don't like the atmosphere." Janet and I lingered in the tavern with Francy that evening. Suddenly we heard our concert on the sound system. Gigi entered. He had given the barmaid a freshly-minted cassette of it to play. We listened, amazed that the concert had ever really happened, and already feeling a sadness that the adventure was over. At least I thought it was over.

Janet and I spent a few days in Paris, then flew home to California. I wanted nothing so much as rest. We had been back only two days when Gigi called from Cologne. Sass had heard the tapes and wanted to overdub some of the material. Could I come back to Germany to help in whatever way might be needed? I caught a Lufthansa flight from Los Angeles. I had still never seen Cologne, except from a train window. Now I was going to.

It was different from Dusseldorf, only a few miles away. It had culture, atmosphere, and charm. Paolo Campi doesn't care for Dusseldorf. He says it isn't a real city — not like Cologne. Francy came up from Geneva, then Sass and Harry Adesso arrived. The session had been scheduled at Wolfgang Hirschmann's excellent studio on the outskirts. There Sass accomplished a second miracle.

As I had anticipated, there was a good deal of leakage on the tapes, particularly through the string mikes. Even with the voice track turned off, you could hear Sass's voice hollowly in the distance. It was going to be necessary for her to *cover her own voice* while improving on her performances. Further, since there were flaws in the vocal track on *The Mystery of Man*, she would have to overdub that one too, covering up not herself but Benard Ighner.

And yet she grinned at me and said, "Now I *really* know these songs. I've been studying them for two weeks."

Wolfgang set her up with a stool and headphones in a darkened studio. She asked that I stay with her. I stood behind her as she sang. Sometimes in difficult passages she held my arm, or I held onto her hand. And I heard something that night that perhaps no one else has ever heard: a private concert by an unaccompanied Sarah Vaughan. She could hear the orchestra in the headphones, but I couldn't. I heard that voice totally naked.

Years ago Big Nick Nicholas told Sahib Shihab, "You should listen to Sarah Vaughan records if only for the way she uses vibrato." There has never been anything like her, and there never will be, for even her imitators, as imitators are wont to do, emulate the manner without understanding its meaning.

The school of singers to which Frank Sinatra and Peggy Lee belong is founded on an aesthetic of dramatic naturalism. The words are *acted* in such a way as to seem like spontaneous speech. Peggy can break your heart with this technique.

Jazz singers, so-called, are of another ilk. Careless about the lyrics, they seek to show off their chops and musicianship with an intent of impressing an audience — and musicians. One may indeed be impressed, but I am seldom moved by such singers.

Sarah Vaughan does neither of these things, though no singer in the world can skate — or ski, if you will — through the changes with more musicianship than she can. Sass doesn't use the voice like a horn simply in terms of her ability to bend and invent new lines, although she sometimes does that too. She creates emotion by tone color. And I never understood this until that evening.

Jazz instrumentalists from the beginning have used a variety of devices to impart vocal qualities to their playing, including plunger and bucket and harmon mutes in trumpets, false fingerings on saxophones, and all sorts of glissandi. An opera soprano in a duet with a flute affects an instrumental sound. But Sass emulates instrumental sounds that themselves in turn emulate vocal sounds.

Why music has the emotional effects it does is unknown. But any composer knows that straight mutes in French horns create a harsh and even nervous sound, while open horns can summon up effects of distant dignity. Tremolo strings can set up a suspenseful sensation. And while Twentieth Century musical theory has tended to argue against inherent meaning in music, every working composer knows quite well that certain sounds evoke certain emotions. Sass evokes emotion not by imitation of speech patterns in the reading of a lyric but by coloring the sounds in a throat over which she has an almost supernatural control. She shapes one word in one of the songs in a way that amazes me more now than it did in the studio that night. There is a phrase in *The Mystery of Man*, "in traces of cities unknown lost in sand." The coloration she puts on the word "lost" is the most lost sound you've ever heard. A year and a half later, having heard it uncounted times, I am still deeply moved by it.

And so it went all evening. She matched her own voice on the tapes, and improved on her performance, creating an album that is a mixture of concert and studio performance. And then, about two or three in the morning, we all knew it was finished. This time the recording really was finished. Gigi, Harry, Francy, and Hirschmann went to summon cars. Sass was sitting on a chair, I on a box, alone in the dim-lit studio like the two last roses of summer.

She said something to the effect that this material must have been as hard to write as it had been to learn. I told her these were in fact the first lyrics I'd written in four years. "One of the last songs before this was written for you, *The Days Have No Names*, for that movie. After that, I wrote one or two more with

Roger Kellaway and just quit."

"Why?"

"There seemed to be no point in writing literate songs in the age of rock and roll. And besides, I had come to just loathe the music business."

She sat in pensive quiet for a moment. Then she said, "I was starting to dislike it quite a bit myself. Maybe behind this project I'll get to like it again."

The cars came. Gigi and I took Sarah and Harry back to their hotel. I gave her a big hug and a kiss on each cheek. "See you at home," I said.

The next morning Gigi and Francy and I caught a flight to the transfer point, Frankfurt. Gigi's was the first flight to leave. "Give me a kiss," he said. And I did, on each cheek, and hugged him. He took off for Milan. Francy and I wandered around the airport, the largest in the world. It is full of restaurants and boutiques and hard-core pornography shops, stores in a chain of them that you find all over Germany, called Dr. Sex.

We entered a quick-food restaurant and had something to eat, then a couple of beers. I felt forlorn in leaving him.

We had always been meticulous in sharing the costs of lunches and drinks but I was now out of German money, so Francy paid our bill. His flight was announced. I walked him to the departure gate. "I owe you ten dollars," I said. "Next time, I'll buy you lunch. A hamburger."

"Oui, et un mauvais," he said. Yes, and a lousy one. We shook hands, almost shyly, and then he went through the gate. Thus I became the last one to leave. An hour later, they called my flight. When we were well up in the air, I sat back to think about all the wonderful people I had come to know through Gigi, above all Francy and Sahib. Sahib was back in Copenhagen. He did not know, and certainly I didn't, that in little more than a year he would come home to America to be lecturer and director of the jazz band at Rutgers University.

After a few hours, I found myself looking down on Arctic ice floes and then the Canadian tundra, the sunlight to the south crackling off countless lakes like sheets of steel. I thought of all the life down there, the fish in those lakes, and the Arctic foxes and hares, and of what Glenn Gould called the Idea of North. The Idea of North even turns up in the lyric that closed the concert. Though I was looking at that landscape far below, I could still see Sass standing there at concert's end, her voice one moment the child who needs our protection and in the next the great earth mother who protects us all, in her vast dignity and joy, singing it.

There is life in shadowed caverns
where the great blue dolphin goes,
in the forests and the deserts,
in the wind and in the snows,
and it's all the precious cargo
of our fragile spaceship Earth,
and it's countless voices cry,
O let us live.

In the roaring soaring cities,
in the mills and in the mines,
in the ice fields and the rice fields,
people work and live their lives,
and they strive to raise their children,
hoping somehow they'll survive.
Is it all that much to ask?
O let them live.

The miracle
is that we're here at all.
In the timeless night,
we are a fragment of light.
This miracle
may never come again.
The planet is alive,
let it live.

It's a hundred million light years
to the farthest fringe of space,
and there may be nothing out there
even like the human race.
We may be all alone then
on our tiny island home.
And the planet is alive.
Let it live.

Yet even that was not the most vivid moment in all the events since Gigi first had mentioned the project to me more than two years earlier. The most vivid moment came in Sass's hotel suite just before the concert. She was dressing in her bedroom while I looked out a window at this thriving modern city built out of ruins. When she came out of the room, I said, "I was thinking about that interview I did with you at the Brant Inn. I didn't know what to ask and you didn't know what to answer. I probably said something equivalent to, 'Have you met the Pope?' That was so long ago. We were so young."

"And afraid of nothing."

"Except each other."

She went back into the bedroom, then came out and said, "I'm ready."

"You look wonderful."

And my friend, with whom I had worked so hard in these last days, looked at me and said, "I love you, Gene."

I put my arms around her and held her as if by that to dispel some of the fear we were feeling, and I said, "Yeah, and I'm still in awe of you, lady. Come on, let's go show them how it's done."

And she did.

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