



BARBARA LEE OWENS

Say it
WITH MUSIC

SONGS YOU LOVE TO HEAR, VOLUME III



Say it with Music

For those unacquainted with Barbara Stamy (or Barbara Lee Owens, as she was once known by her stage and maiden name), reading the liner notes to Volumes 1 and 2 of her collection entitled *Songs You Love to Hear* and *Falling in Love with Love* may provide a meaningful introduction. With such background, hopefully you will be better prepared to enjoy these long-lost tracks from her live weekly radio program broadcast on KDKA during the late 1940s. If you don't own the first two albums, those notes can be found on her website by visiting www.barbaraleeowens.com.

Live transcriptions were made of the shows by simultaneously “cutting” them on 16-inch acetate discs that were subsequently couriered to other radio stations for syndication via playback as a phonograph record. Twelve of these master broadcast discs survived for more than 60 years, and digitized tracks from those recordings now enable us to share some of her music with you. Barbara is accompanied by Russ Merritt on piano and celesta, and Johnny Mitchell on the organ; Paul Shannon is the announcer.

Though recognized later in her career for singing oratorios, cantatas, sacred, and classical music, Barbara is best remembered as a songstress of Broadway show tunes. It was singing music of this genre that first propelled her into the national spotlight by winning the *Wilkins Amateur Hour* contest at age 21, immediately after which she was signed by the Breakfast Cheer Coffee Company, which sponsored her radio show. Barbara's professional career spanned six decades—from the mid 1940s through the early 1990s, though even today she will break into song if requested.

Much of what singers do with music is not printed on the page, and I believe two of the things my mother does best would fall under that category—phrasing and diction.

As she claims, “phrasing is something you just feel, whereas projecting text is a disciplined combination of proper enunciation and diction.” When I approached her for vocal advice, she would often remind me that “to engage and involve the listener, singing is like telling a story, so above all else, you must project the text.” Therefore, *Say it with Music* is an appropriate choice for this album’s title.

As you will discover from this and her other early recordings, Barbara’s voice once commanded an extremely broad breadth, and though now limited to the contralto range, it has held up remarkably well over the years. To give you some idea, included is a bonus track (#15) of her singing a bluesy/jazzy version of “Abide with Me” from John Gardner’s *Five Hymns in Popular Style*. Accompanied by the Shadyside Presbyterian Church Chancel Choir with Russell G. Wichmann at the piano, Barbara recorded this piece in the late 1970s, or three decades after her final radio broadcast.

The Sheer Joy of Singing

In her own words, Barbara responds to questions posed in recent interviews.

What was it like to be so famous and performing at such a young age?

First, I didn’t really know I was famous. I never felt famous; it was just my life and what life handed me. I always loved to sing—anything. Singing is part of my soul, and that’s the truth. I’m grateful that God blessed me with a voice and others encouraged me along the way.

When did you decide to pursue singing seriously?

In the ninth grade, but as far as deciding on a career, it just happened. Since I loved to sing, it wasn’t like work, though it did require lots of work. I didn’t go to music school, so I had a lot to make up for.





If not music, what did you study?

Much like my tastes in music, education was a fairly eclectic experience. As valedictorian of my high school class, I had a Senatorial full academic scholarship to the University of Pittsburgh, where I earned an undergraduate degree in English and Psychology. During the summers I attended both the University of Wisconsin and the School of Music at Carnegie Tech (now Carnegie-Mellon University) to study drama and music. Adding those credits enabled me to graduate from Pitt in three years, but I stayed on as a graduate teaching assistant in Biology for a year until my career took off. Many years later, in 1972, I got a Masters in Child Psychology at Pitt as well.

Why Child Psychology?

To figure out what I did wrong. Ha, let me rephrase that—to figure out what I might have done better when raising my children.

How about any ongoing study of music?

As a musician, you never stop learning; it's why I loved going to Spoleto for so many years—first to Italy and then to Charleston. To perform sacred and classical repertoire, singers must do so in many languages. Beyond Italian, French and German, the hardest was learning Hebrew, which I did much later on when singing in synagogues. But like most of life, singing was something to be understood and mastered; then I had to move along in life when my kids became my real love.

What singers did you most admire, and what were your favorite songs to sing?

Back then, as far as my contemporaries, Sinatra of course, Eileen Farrell, and Judy Garland. Later on, Barbra Streisand, definitely Streisand—she's my favorite. As to songs, I loved them all, but of the pop stuff, probably *My Funny Valentine* and *You Go To My Head*. It's really impossible to choose favorites among different types of choral literature.

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Classical music, of course, was much harder to prepare—so many vocal nuances and languages to learn in order to make it sound like I knew what I was doing.

Was performing live in a studio different from being on stage?

Radio was much easier than stage work. For one thing, we had the music in front of us. Also, we could watch each other closely, which helped hold it all together. Oddly enough, it was a far more personal experience than being in front of an audience.

In what ways?

On stage, all you really see are the lights in your eyes, so you don't really connect with your audience until it's over and the applause starts. So, yes, you really could get intimate with just a microphone. When singing with an orchestra or soloing in front of a large chorus, you are at the total mercy of the conductor—there are good ones and bad ones, and I've worked with both kinds. Also, when performing on stage, I always felt rattled because so many things came into play—beyond singing everything accurately, you had to deal with the costuming, makeup, blocking and then act as well.

What was the wildest thing you ever did?

I'm really quite reserved, self-contained and, for the most part, fairly proper about everything. But if you asked my kids, they would likely agree on what *they* consider the craziest thing I did. And if my husband were alive, no doubt he would concur. At age 54, and to fulfill a childhood dream, I backpacked and “Eurorailed” my way throughout all of Western Europe for three months...alone, staying in everything from youth hostels in the Swiss Alps to palaces in Italy and France.

Alone? Why didn't your husband go along?

It was simple—he didn't want to, but to be fair, Lloyd really couldn't be away from his business for that long, especially in the summer.

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I'm not sure he believed I was really going until I started to pack. Over the years since, I've traveled conventionally to China, Nepal, Thailand, Mexico, Israel, Egypt, the Middle East, India, Hong Kong, Alaska, Australia, New Zealand, most of the Caribbean islands and the eastern European countries that once formed the Soviet Union, and probably some other places that I've forgotten.

Apart from the excitement, what made you such an adventuresome world traveler?

It may sound corny in today's skeptical world, but what I really enjoyed was seeing the light of the world in the eyes of all the world's people.

How does it feel to be called the "last local living icon from the golden days of radio"?

Lonely! Now tell me who said that.

As you look back on it all now, and with the perspective of 88 years, what would you say about your singing career in one sentence?

The ability to sing was, and still is, so wonderful, and I thank God for that privilege because it was the best way I could express myself.

Lloyd F. Stamy, Jr. _____

P.S. Thanks Mom, for taking "saying it with music" to a new level. After all, how else would I have learned the subjunctive mood if it were not for your suggestion that I could always remember anything in song? Your (often sung) example from *Fiddler on the Roof* enabled me to master the subjunctive only by remembering to this day that it is "if I *were* a rich man" and not "if I *was* a rich man".

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B A R B A R A L E E O W E N S



1. Say It With Music
2. One Night of Love
3. Aloha Oe (Farewell To Thee)
4. When A Maid Comes
Knocking At Your Heart
5. But Beautiful
6. It's A Lovely Day Tomorrow
7. Romance
8. When You're Away
9. Poor Butterfly
10. I'll Get By
(As Long As I Have You)
11. Love Sends A Little Gift
Of Roses
12. I Get A Kick Out Of You
13. If I Had My Way
14. When I Grow Too
Old To Dream
15. Abide With Me

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| 1. Say It With Music IRVING BERLIN (1921)..... | (0:53) |
| 2. One Night of Love VICTOR SCHERTZINGER/GUS KAHN (1934) | (2:20) |
| 3. Aloha Oe (Farewell To Thee) LILI'UOKALANI (1878) | (1:39) |
| 4. When A Maid Comes Knocking At Your Heart OTTO HAUERBACH/RUDOLF FRIML (1912) | (2:03) |
| 5. But Beautiful JOHNNY BURKE/JIMMY VAN HEUSEN (1947) | (2:38) |
| 6. It's A Lovely Day Tomorrow IRVING BERLIN (1940) | (2:07) |
| 7. Romance OSCAR HAMMERSTEIN II/SIGMUND ROMBERG (1926) | (3:01) |
| 8. When You're Away HENRY BLOSSOM/VICTOR HERBERT (1924) | (3:30) |
| 9. Poor Butterfly JOHN GOLDEN/RAYMOND HUBBELL (1916) | (2:46) |
| 10. I'll Get By (As Long As I Have You) ROY TURK/FRED E. AHLERT (1928) | (1:12) |
| 11. Love Sends A Little Gift Of Roses LESLIE COOKE/JOHN OPENSHAW (1919)..... | (2:35) |
| 12. I Get A Kick Out Of You COLE PORTER (1934) | (1:39) |
| 13. If I Had My Way LOU KLEIN/JAMES KENDIS (1913)..... | (3:06) |
| 14. When I Grow Too Old To Dream OSCAR HAMMERSTEIN II/SIGMUND ROMBERG (1934)..... | (2:35) |
| 15. Abide With Me JOHN GARDNER (1964)..... | (4:35) |

This collection of songs sung by Barbara Lee Owens Stacy in the late 1940s is the third of a multi-volume series of recordings also available for purchase in electronic format through iTunes, Amazon and other fine digital retailers.


PRODUCED BY LLOYD E STAMY, JR.
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To order Barbara's other recordings and learn more about Songs You Love to Hear from the golden age of radio, please visit her website at www.barbaraleeowens.com



A photograph of a woman with short brown hair, smiling, wearing a blue dress with large yellow and white floral patterns. She is wearing gold hoop earrings and a white wristband on her left wrist. The background is a light-colored wall with a grid pattern.

with love, Lee Starny
Barbara