

Cleveland Orchestra tribute to Fitzgerald & Sinatra at Blossom (Aug. 19)

by Robert Rollin



On Sunday evening, August 18 at Blossom, Randall Craig Fleischer led The Cleveland Orchestra in “Frank & Ella: The Music of Ella Fitzgerald and Frank Sinatra,” featuring soprano Capathia Jenkins and singer/pianist Tony DeSare in songs that Ella and Frank made famous. Jenkins has a gorgeous, well-controlled voice. DeSare’s talented rhythm section supported his wonderful piano playing.

The vocalists harmonized beautifully on Steve Allen’s *This Could be the Start of Something Big*. Fleischer and the Orchestra provided sensitive accompaniment here and all evening.

Their duet on the Fain/Kahal hit *I’ll be Seeing You (In All the Old Familiar Places)* sparkled. When Jenkins entered, DeSare accompanied unobtrusively, later presenting a virtuosic solo. They gracefully harmonized the final verse until Jenkins shot to the high register with a closing flourish.

The two soloists gave Cole Porter’s *Night and Day* a bright, up-tempo performance with lustrous harmony. Their duet on Ray Charles’ *Hallelujah, I Love Her So* was a delight, enhanced by an expressive alto sax solo.

Mercer’s *Something’s Gotta Give* began with Jenkins, soon followed by DeSare’s lightning-fast piano solo. The two shared a stunning duet on Rodgers & Hart’s *The Lady Is a Tramp*.

Both soloists performed a kaleidoscopic Great American Songbook medley, including Gershwin's lyrical *They Can't Take That Away from Me* and *Our Love Is Here to Stay*, and Henry Mancini's enduring *Moon River*. They segued to Hamilton's *How High the Moon*. Bart Howard's *Fly Me to the Moon* and the Kay/Gordon rhythm and blues song *That's Life* were entrancing.



Jenkins' rendition of Jerome Kern's *All the Things You Are* displayed velvety timbre. Gershwin's *Fascinating Rhythm* had the grace of a slow ballad. *Laura*, by film composer David Raksin, took on a special glow, enhanced by a muted trumpet solo. Malneck/Mercer's *Goody, Goody* and Ella's own *A Tisket, A Tasket* — both peppy novelty songs — gleamed, as did Harold Arlen's *Get Happy*.

The rhythm section supported DeSare in Bloom/Mercer's *Day In, Day Out*. Styne/Comden's *Just in Time* scintillated in lively exchanges between vocalists and guitarist. A shimmering glockenspiel added color to Paul Anka's *My Way*.

Fleischer and the Orchestra performed Glenn Miller's intense *In the Mood* and Louis Prima's *Sing, Sing, Sing* with exceptional sax and woodwind support, and Porter's *Begin the Beguine* with beautiful decorative percussion.

The duo's final love-song medley included the Arlen favorite *I've Got the World on a String*, Porter's *I've Got You Under My Skin* and *They Can't Take that Away from Me*, and Heinz Meier's *Summer Wind*. The sprightly encore, Arlen's *Let's Fall in Love*, received a standing ovation.

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