

## Claus

When Claus Ogerman wrote the arrangements for an album by Diana Krall, recorded with the London Symphony Orchestra early in 2001, no one was as surprised as I. He had not written arrangements and orchestrations for the music of anyone but himself in twenty-two years, and had told me that he would never do such writing again, although he had been repeatedly asked — indeed begged — to do so by all sorts of singers, jazz players, and record producers.

In the twenty years from his arrival in 1959 in New York from Germany until he simply stopped writing pop and jazz albums for others in 1979 to devote himself to his own compositions, Claus wrote arrangements for an astonishing array of singers, including Frank Sinatra, Barbara Streisand, Diahann Carroll, Carroll Channing, Bobby Darin, Sammy Davis Jr., Connie Francis, Eddie Fisher, Robert Goulet, Jack Jones, Jackie and Roy, Johnny Mathis, Marilyn Maye, Gordon McRae, Wayne Newton, Mel Tormé, Sarah Vaughan, and Dinah Washington. He even wrote for Josh White and David Clayton Thomas. He wrote a magnificent album for the Brazilian singer João Gilberto, one of the central figures in the bossa nova movement, titled *Amoroso*.

He also wrote for an enormous number of jazz instrumentalists, including Michael Brecker, Urbie Green, Benny Goodman, Paul Horn, Freddie Hubbard, Wes Montgomery, Oscar Peterson, Jack Teagarden, Cal Tjader, Kai Winding, and especially Bill Evans. In addition, he has written ballet scores for the American Ballet Theatre, the Cleveland Ballet, and the National Ballet of Canada.

But he became best known and respected for a series of albums with the Brazilian composer, pianist, and guitarist Antonio Carlos Jobim. These amounted to far more than arrangements of the Jobim songs. This was a remarkable collaboration, whose only precedent, really, is that between Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn, and it's hard to know where Jobim ends and Claus begins.

He wrote, by his own best estimate, more than two hundred albums during those years, showing an astonishing range of comprehension, from the crassest of pop music to the most elegant jazz-classical alloys.

Long after he gave up writing for others, he continued to

receive requests to do so from Prince, Wynton Marsalis, Dee Dee Bridgewater, Ella Fitzgerald, Tony Bennett, Michael Feinstein, and, of course, quite a number of those he had worked with previously. He found turning them down painful, and in a 1991 letter to producer Tommy LiPuma, who had asked him to write an album for Natalie Cole of songs made famous by her father, he wrote, "I'm sure that you know as well as I that you have a big seller on your hands, no matter who's doing the string charts." He was right, of course, and Johnny Mandel took the assignment, doing a magnificent job and helping make the album *Unforgettable* a best-seller.

"I truly gave up arranging in 1979," Claus continued to LiPuma, "and it would be hard for me to go back to dress up pop songs now. I would have to go back in time, and if I would work on the arrangements, my ideas would be out of concept (and finally disappointing) to the artist and the fans of these songs . . . I was only guesting in the arranging field for a brief time."

An odd perspective from a man who remains one of the most admired arrangers American (and for that matter Brazilian and European) music ever knew.

Claus was nominated for Grammy Awards in various categories fifteen times, but he won only once, for Best Instrumental Arrangement for the George Benson track *Soulful Strut*. He deserved to win it far more often than that in that one category alone, Best Instrumental Arrangement, for Jobim's *Boto*, *Saudade do Brasil* (both in the magnificent *Urubu* on Warner Brothers) and *Wave*, among others. But, and this is significant, he was the arranger on thirty-six Grammy-nominated albums, including nine in 1976 alone.

Claus abandoned the American record business so abruptly and completely that he left a hole, a hole not initially noticed. But by 1995, a reader in Miami, Florida, named John Tindall was moved to write in a letter to *Down Beat*:

"With all the Antonio Carlos Jobim tributes I have read about lately, not one has mentioned the contribution of master arranger Claus Ogerman. It is now time to praise him. Ogerman is responsible for some of Jobim's finest albums, including *The Composer Plays* and *Wave*. Ogerman's contributions to jazz since the early '60s include work with such diverse artists as Stan Getz, Wes Montgomery, Stanley Turrentine, Bill Evans, and George Benson. Two of his finest