



BE MY LOVE

A TRIBUTE TO MARIO LANZA

STEPHEN COSTELLO

CONSTANTINE ORBELIAN · KAUNAS CITY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA



MENU

A NOTE BY STEPHEN COSTELLO

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SPECIAL THANKS

CREDITS

TRACK LIST

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As a tenor raised in Northeast Philadelphia, recording an album dedicated to Mario Lanza felt like coming home in the most profound way. Lanza wasn't just another great voice on a record; he was the legendary tenor from our own city whose music filled so many Philadelphia homes, including mine. Growing up with his voice echoing through our neighborhood, I heard that golden, unstoppable tenor carrying raw power wrapped in velvet — emotion that could make a young tenor believe opera belonged to everyday people. His singing taught me that technique and heart didn't have to fight each other; you could have both, and you could share them with the world. As a young tenor struggling through my first lessons and auditions, Lanza became my secret weapon: when I felt small or uncertain, I'd put on "Be My Love" or "Without a Song" and remember that a young tenor from Philadelphia had conquered Hollywood and the world's greatest stages with nothing but God-given talent and sheer will. He showed me that a tenor's job is to stop time, to make listeners forget their troubles for three glorious minutes, and that Philadelphia blood could fuel a career that reached every corner of the globe.

That's why stepping into the studio to record this album wasn't just another project — it was a sacred promise kept. I wanted to honor the man who lit the fire in me before I even knew what a high C was, to prove that his influence still burns bright in the next generation of Philly tenors. Every phrase I sang carried his spirit: the open-throated passion, the fearless portamento, the way he made classical music feel like pure romance. Recording these songs let me thank him publicly for the courage he gave a nervous young tenor staring at his reflection in a practice-room mirror. More than anything, I hope this album carries Lanza's legacy forward, reminding listeners that greatness doesn't always start in marble halls — it can begin on the sidewalks of Philadelphia, where so many of us learned to walk and dream.

BE MY LOVE

Mario Lanza was a bright talent whose glorious voice, good looks, and innate charisma made him a natural for stardom. His career lasted only about 10 years, but it was boosted by two strokes of luck. Discovered by Louis B. Mayer in concert at the Hollywood Bowl in 1947, he signed a 7-year contract with MGM and starred in his first movie musical, *That Midnight Kiss*, in 1949. Around 1948, the introduction of the LP and 45 RPM record formats opened up mass distribution of music. Operatic music launched his career, but movie musicals brought him stardom. The recording companies took advantage of his popularity by issuing multiple versions of his most popular songs in cast albums, singles, and LP compilations. He also hosted his own radio show from 1951–52, which allowed him to experiment with repertoire.

Lanza's sincerity is reflected in his choice of repertoire: his most popular numbers are open-hearted expressions of love, religious devotion, or courage in the face of a challenge. With a mastery of diction and legato reminiscent of Pavarotti, and clarion high notes, he was ideally equipped to bring a song to an stirring finish.

The songs in this collection were written mostly between 1929 and 1950, with outliers including the 1900 inspirational romantic ballad "Because," and the extra songs written for *The Student Prince* in 1954. The characters Lanza portrayed onscreen, and the songs he sang, reflect the unironic spirit of the 1950s so unlike our age. Love was divinely inspired, prayers were fervent, and troubles were faced with resolve and optimism. In the decade after WWII, Sondheim anomie and Fosse decadence were yet to emerge, and Lanza was not a part of the Rock and roll revolution. The 1950s was the final era when "legitimate" operatic singing technique remained popular in mass media, and Lanza was able to ride its last wave.

"Without a Song," by Vincent Youmans (lyrics by Billy Rose and Edward Eliscu) was written for the 1929 musical *Great Day*, inspired by the success of *Showboat* (1927). But the production was plagued with conflict and had the bad timing to open 12 days before the stock market crash. It was never revived after its 36-performance run, but the inspirational "Without a Song" became a much-recorded pop standard.

"You'll Never Walk Alone," from Rogers and Hammerstein's *Carousel* (1945) is perhaps the most famous anthem of encouragement produced by the American musical theater. Sung to Julie Jordan after her husband dies, it begins simply, in a middle range, and swells through harmonic changes into the final soaring line, with its climactic statement of the title. It has been frequently recorded and is often sung by team supporters before football (soccer) matches.

Five of the selections on this album are from the 1954 film *The Student Prince*, Sigmund Romberg and Dorothy Donnelly's bittersweet operetta about a royal scion sent to university to acquire social graces before his royal wedding. At Heidelberg University he falls in love with his landlord's daughter, Kathy. Lanza left the film over artistic differences, but he recorded Prince Karl Franz's songs for his replacement Edmund Purdom to lip-synch. In contrast to the many jolly drinking and college choruses, the Prince's songs trace the emotional awakening of a young man in love.

With "Serenade" (Romberg), Karl Franz softens Kathy's resistance to his attentions. Lanza also performed this song in *Seven Hills of Rome*

(1958). (A different "Serenade" by Brodsky is featured in the 1956 movie *Serenade*, also starring Lanza)

Romberg's "Golden Days" comes late in *The Student Prince*, as Karl Franz reminisces about Heidelberg with his Privy Counselor. The lingering waltz tempo conveys the Prince's nostalgia as he remembers the love he sacrificed for duty.

"Because" by Guy d'Hardelot (pseudonym for Helen Rhodes) and Edward Teschmacher is the oldest song in this compilation. Published in 1900, it was recorded by Caruso in 1912; Lanza sang it in the 1951 film that made him a star, *The Great Caruso*. Like many of Lanza's romantic ballads, it conveys the spiritual nature of the narrator's admiration for his beloved.

"Your Is My Heart Alone," (Dein is mein ganzes Herz), from Franz Lehár's 1929 operetta *The Land of Smiles* (*Das land des Lächelns*), was a signature ballad written for the Austrian tenor Richard Tauber, a frequent collaborator of the composer. When Tauber emigrated to England he adopted Harry B. Smith's 1931 translation, used here. Its curvaceous melody is almost conversational but gives the tenor several high notes to express his ardor.

“Beloved,” one of several Nicholas Brodsky and Paul Francis Webster’s songs that supplement *The Student Prince*, is the passionate heart-on-sleeve ballad that helps Karl Franz overcome Kathy’s refusal to run away with him (spoiler: the prince returns home and marries his royal intended).

“I’ll Walk with God,” also by Brodsky and Webster for *The Student Prince*, is Karl Franz’s prayerful, emotional farewell to his grandfather, the late king, as he lies in state. The melody begins almost haltingly, but opens into sweeping phrases as the prince resolves to rely on divine guidance to face his future with courage.

Versatile movie composer Albert Hay Malotte wrote his setting of “The Lord’s Prayer” in 1935, which remains probably the most famous version of this prayer even today. Lanza sang it in *Because You’re Mine* (1952), about an opera star drafted into the army, and recorded it for *Christmas with Mario Lanza*. Beginning slowly, the prayer climaxes on a ringing high B flat.

“With a Song in My Heart” is a Rogers and Hart’s classic from the 1929 Broadway show *Spring is Here*. Lanza sang it in 1951 on his

radio show, and he recorded it again after the 1952 biopic about the singer-actress Jane Froman became a hit. The poignant melody expresses a joyful but chaste love for his “adorable” sweetheart.

“Granada” (1932), by the popular Mexican composer Augustín Lara (words and music), is an exuberant bolero celebrating the Spanish city. It has been recorded in over 250 versions, and was adopted in 1997 by the City of Granada as its official anthem. Lanza sang it in the movie *Because You’re Mine*. It’s the only song in this compilation not sung in English.

“Be My Love” (Nicholas Brodsky and Sammy Cahn, 1950) was the most popular song from *The Toast of New Orleans*, and Lanza’s first million-seller hit single. Its swooping, breathless melody expresses the lover’s almost desperate longing for his beloved.

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STEPHEN COSTELLO

Stephen Costello has been hailed as “a prodigiously gifted singer whose voice makes an immediate impact” (*Associated Press News*). The Philadelphia-born tenor quickly established a reputation as a “first-class talent” (*Opera News*) after coming to national attention in 2007, when, aged 26, he made his Metropolitan Opera debut on the company’s season-opening night. Two years later, Stephen won the prestigious Richard Tucker Award, and he has since appeared at many of the world’s most important opera houses and music festivals, including the Royal Opera House, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Wiener Staatsoper, Opéra national de Paris, Staatsoper Berlin, Gran Teatre del Liceu, Semperoper Dresden, Bayerische Staatsoper, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Hamburgische Staatsoper, San Francisco Opera, Washington National Opera, Bolshoi Theatre, Arena di Verona, Salzburger Festspiele, Bregenzer Festspiele, and Glyndebourne Festival. As *Opera News* noted in a recent “Spotlight” double-page spread, “the all-American tenor” is now “at the top of his game.”

In the 2026/27 season, Stephen returns to the Metropolitan Opera for Rodolfo in *La bohème*, sings the title role in *Don Carlo* at Opernhaus

Zürich and Semperoper Dresden, Don José in *Carmen* at Staatsoper Hamburg, and returns to Teatro Colón for Romeo in *Roméo et Juliette*.

In the previous season, Stephen debuted the role of Riccardo in *Ballo in Maschera* at Opernhaus Zürich before bringing it to the Edinburgh International Festival. He sang the title role in *Don Carlo* at Dallas Opera, Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly* at Grand Théâtre de Genève and Santa Fe Opera, and returned to Canadian Opera Company for Romeo in *Roméo et Juliette*.

In March 2018 Stephen opened a memorial concert at the Royal Opera House in honour of Dmitri Hvorostovsky, singing alongside, amongst others, Anna Netrebko, Elīna Garanča, and Angela Gheorghiu. In addition to winning the 2009 Richard Tucker Award and receiving further grants from the Richard Tucker Music Foundation, Stephen won First Prize in the 2006 George London Foundation Awards Competition, First Prize and Audience Prize in the Giargiari Bel Canto Competition, and First Prize in the Licia Albanese-Puccini Foundation Competition. Stephen is a graduate of the Academy of Vocal Arts.

CONSTANTINE ORBELIAN



Four-time GRAMMY® nominated conductor Constantine Orbelian has been called “the singer’s dream collaborator” by *Opera News*, which hailed him for conducting vocal repertoire “with the sensitivity of a lieder pianist.” In 2021, he was appointed Music Director and Principal Conductor of the New York City Opera. He has been the Principal Conductor and Music Director of the Kaunas City Symphony Orchestra (Lithuania) since 2013.

Constantine has toured and recorded with some of the world’s greatest singers, such as American stars Renée Fleming, Sondra

Radvanovsky, Lawrence Brownlee, and Stephen Costello, and with the great Dmitri Hvorostovsky and other renowned Russian singers in European, North American, Russian, and Asian music centers. Born in San Francisco to Russian and Armenian emigré parents, Constantine made his performing debut as a piano prodigy with the San Francisco Symphony at the age of 11. After graduating from The Juilliard School in New York, he embarked on a career as a piano virtuoso that included appearances with major symphony orchestras throughout the U.S., U.K., Europe, and Russia. Recent collaborations have been with Daniil Trifonov in Mexico City, Isabel Leonard at the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires, Elīna Garanča at the Teatro Bellas Artes in Madrid, and Kristina Reiko Cooper performing the European and American premiere (at Carnegie Hall) of Lera Auerbach’s Symphony No. 6 “Vessels of Light” dedicated to Chiune Sugihara. Constantine’s GRAMMY® nominated albums with Lawrence Brownlee (Rossini arias), Dmitri Hvorostovsky (Verdi’s *Rigoletto* and Georgy Sviridov’s *Cast off Russia*), and Stephen Costello (*A te, o cara*) were received with critical acclaim.

Constantine was awarded the Medal of Friendship by the President of Armenia, Serzh Sarkissian, in 2015.

KAUNAS CITY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA



GRAMMY® nominated Kaunas City Symphony Orchestra was founded in 1988. It plays an integral part in the cultural life of Lithuania and the entire Baltic region. Outside its home country, the orchestra has performed in Estonia, Norway, Italy, Croatia, Germany, Finland, and Switzerland, among others.

The orchestra has played with renowned conductors, singers and soloists, including Mirga Gražinyte-Tyla, Giedre Šlekyte, Adrijana Čepaitė, Juozas Domarkas, David Giménez, Rune Bergmann, Dmitri Hvorostovsky, Lawrence

Brownlee, Stephen Costello, John Osborn, José Carreras, Asmik Grigorian, Elīna Garanča, Alexander Markov, Domenico Nordio, Philippe Graffin, Laurens Weinhold, Alexander Kniazev, David Geringas, Aydar Gaynullin, and Romain Leleu.

Alongside classical repertoire, the orchestra performs pop, rock, and jazz music. It has had the privilege to play with famed artists such as Scorpions, Electric Light Orchestra, Smokie, Sarah Brightman, Bonnie Tyler, Gregory Porter, Chris Norman, Robert Wells, and Maggie Reilly.

*A special thanks to the General Director of
the Kaunas City Symphony Orchestra, Mr. Algimantas Treikauskas,
for his invaluable support and dedication to this recording project!*

*I would like to dedicate this album to my mother Vera Orbelian.
"Be My Love" was the way she lived her life!*

– Constantine Orbelian

**Recorded at Kaunas Philharmonic,
Lithuania, on 19–23 May, 2025**

Recording Producers & Mastering:
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Danielevicius



BE MY LOVE

Stephen Costello

tenor

Constantine Orbelian

conductor

Kaunas City

Symphony Orchestra

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- | | | | |
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| 1. | Without a Song | Vincent Youmans (1898–1946) | 4:06 |
| 2. | You'll Never Walk Alone | Richard Rodgers (1902–1979) | 4:13 |
| 3. | Serenade | Sigmund Romberg (1887–1951) | 3:43 |
| 4. | Golden Days | Sigmund Romberg | 3:39 |
| 5. | Because | Guy d'Hardelot (1858–1936) | 2:27 |
| 6. | Your Is My Heart Alone | Franz Lehár (1870–1948) | 3:59 |
| 7. | Beloved | Nicholas Brodsky (1905–1958) | 3:29 |
| 8. | I'll Walk with God | Nicholas Brodsky | 3:21 |
| 9. | The Lord's Prayer | Albert Hay Malotte (1895–1964) | 3:26 |
| 10. | With a Song in My Heart | Richard Rodgers | 3:52 |
| 11. | Granada | Agustín Lara (1897–1970) | 4:45 |
| 12. | Be My Love | Nicholas Brodsky | 3:36 |

All works arranged by Flaviu Mogoşan

Total Time

44:40