

Kay Cole • Souvenir

Researching this CD has been a wonderful and fascinating journey ...finding songs I love, but also feeling connected to the story in each song. Almost all the original songs I thought I wanted to sing fell by the wayside as new songs took their place. For me, a song is musical storytelling and has to resonate within my heart. That connection to the humanity of the story, hopefully allows it to become universal. I am a quirky, sentimental spirit. To me it is as important to cry as it is to laugh. Balance... it can be invisible and challenging to achieve. But I believe, it is important to keep reaching toward the inner you, and having the courage to share that knowledge with the world. Something about every song on this CD reflects the rainbow of love throughout my life.

I have so many wonderful souvenirs I've gathered along the way since making my Broadway debut when I was twelve. I've worked with incredibly talented people both onstage and on the production side. Here are a few memories I'll always cherish.

I had the good fortune of working with Anthony Newley on the original Broadway production of *The Roar of the Greasepaint, the Smell of the Crowd*. I portrayed the Russian urchin and understudied The Girl. It was an amazing time. I had a crush on Tony, who was a wonderful man. He was generous with all of the urchins and so was Joan Collins his wife at the time. For my sixteenth birthday, my fellow urchins arranged a once in a lifetime gift for me – after the birthday song and after I made a wish and blew out my candles, I then received a very sexy kiss from Tony – my first. Wow. It was fabulous – Sweet 16. What a memory! Later, Tony invited me to the orchestra recording of “I Think I Like You,” a song from a film he'd just finished doing, *Doctor Doolittle*. What a glorious feeling to be in a recording studio with Tony and so many amazing musicians. So it was only natural that we included that song along with “My First Love Song” from the show we did together.

When I was playing Minerva in the off Broadway production of *Best Foot Forward* in 1963, I had a secret admirer. I was playing opposite Christopher Walken, who was called Ronnie in those days. Liza Minnelli was also in this production. It was a wonderful time. Judy Garland often came to our parties and naturally sang, giving all of us a personal concert. My secret admirer left a red rose on my make-up table every night for the entire run. Ten years later I found out who it was: Christopher Walken!

I went into my first of many Broadway shows when I was 12 years old. It was *Bye Bye Birdie*. My career in show business started when I was 6 years old in Los Angeles doing live TV and plays. All the while taking my many dance classes, but I was devoted to ballet. The surprise of *Bye Bye Birdie* was that I was

destined to meet my future husband, Michael Lamont, who was one of the teenagers in that show. My role in the show was the Second Sad Girl. So when we began planning this CD, Bruce, my producer, and I thought it would be fun to do “One Boy” from *Birdie* and couple it with “You Are for Loving” from *Best Foot Forward*, my first off-Broadway show.

Michael Lamont wove in and out of my life. We were friends during *Birdie* and while we attended Professional Children's School, and remained friends through *Jesus Christ, Superstar* and while I was doing *A Chorus Line*. But as so often happens, we lost contact as we moved on with our lives. Many years later, when I had just moved to Los Angeles, I needed new headshots and a tap class mate suggested her photographer, who she said was amazing. His name is Michael Lamont, she tells me. Oh it couldn't be the same person, I think. But when I called, I knew that voice and it was my Michael Lamont. Funny how life works.

I've been wanting to do an album for a very long time, but I truly believe that you do things when the time is right, and the time seemed absolutely right to do this. I hope you enjoy it as much as I enjoyed doing it.

— Kay

One fine September day in 1975, I was in New York to have a sneak preview of the film I'd just written and co-directed, *The First Nudie Musical* – at that point we were still shopping for distributors and United Artists was coming to take a look at the film in an East Side theater where Woody Allen's *Love and Death* was playing. The preview wasn't until eight at night, so I had the day to myself. I took a walk in the morning and ended up in Shubert Alley, where I ran into a friend of mine, Rick Mason – he'd done a show for me in Los Angeles. He asked what I was doing in town and I told him and I asked him what he was up to. He pointed to the Shubert Theater and told me he was in previews with a new musical. I'd never heard of it – something called *A Chorus Line*. He asked if I wanted to see the matinee, I said yes, of course, and he arranged a house seat for me.

I was nervous about our preview in a few hours, but I figured this would be a fine way to kill two hours. The lights went down, the piano played its opening six-note figure, the lights came up on a stage filled with dancers facing upstage learning a routine, and I, for reasons I cannot tell you, began to weep. And I continued to laugh and weep for the next couple of hours. I walked out of there emotionally drained, knowing I'd just seen one of the most perfect pieces of musical theater ever, and let me tell you I wasn't relishing sitting through the preview of my film after that experience.

I was very taken with the entire cast, but there was

one young woman in the show whose voice blew me away, especially when she sang the money note in “At The Ballet.” I thought the voice was unique and amazing, and the young woman was adorable. When the show came to L.A. to our own Shubert Theater, I was there many times. I met and hung out with several cast members, and I struck up a friendship with that young woman whose voice had so blown me away – Kay Cole. Some of that friendship was long distance – I still have letters from her from a time when communicating other than via phone was done by letter – remember that? I didn't see her for quite a while, and then during the mid-1990s I worked with her briefly in one of those Los Angeles STAGE/AIDS benefits, which she was choreographing and I was recording. We kept in touch after that.

She'd become a well respected choreographer and a director, and had basically stopped performing and singing. In 2010 I began doing a monthly series of cabaret shows that became really popular (and still going strong six years later). Kay and her hubby Michael came to a couple of them and really enjoyed them. I sat her down one day and said, “You need to sing at one of our shows.” She scrunched up her face in that Kay way, but when I want someone to do something I get, well, a little relentless. She finally said yes, probably just to shut me up. Well, she was that same amazing performer I'd loved back in 1975. That voice, that clarity, that intelligence – all there once again, like magic. And I think she loved doing it because she came back several more times.

After that, she began to talk to me about the possibility of doing an album. We talked about it quite a bit. Meantime, I created and directed a new musical revue of Anthony Newley and Leslie Bricusse songs and Kay choreographed it, and then I directed a production of *L'il Abner*, which Kay also choreographed. And again we talked of doing an album.

Early in 2016 we talked about it again. But this time we made the decision to just do it and stop talking about it – it was time. So, in the summer we began to meet – Kay, me, and our wonderful musical director, John Boswell. She had lots of song ideas, I had a few myself, and she sang through a lot of material. And over a couple of months the keepers became apparent to us, other songs fell by the wayside, and new ones popped up until we had what we all felt was a really interesting and eclectic mix of songs. Recording it was an absolute pleasure from start to finish, one of the best experiences I've ever had in a recording studio. When you have two great artists like Kay and John – just them and nothing else – everything becomes magical. But enough with liner notes – go listen.

— Bruce Kimmel