



MICHAEL HOPE

Hallelujah

**BONUS READING MATERIALS
AND LINER NOTES!**

ABOUT THIS CD

Thank you as always for purchasing this CD and granting me the huge privilege of sharing music with you. This is an honour I never take for granted.

This album is for you. I've wanted to fill it with songs that I am hoping will make you feel comforted, make you feel optimistic and make you feel, well, just plain good - the way music is supposed to...



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First of all – a big thank you to my buddy, Mark Ellestad, who was so patient and kind in every aspect of the recording, mixing and editing of this CD. Making an album is a stressful endeavour. Mark's calm, experienced and steady hand at the controls has been one of the core assets of this project.

Also – a singer is no better than the team with whom he surrounds himself. On this CD, I was lucky to be able to collaborate with three artists who are not only three of my favourite musicians, but who are also three of my favourite people. Cody Obst, Sarah Gieck and Megan Singer are masters of their instruments, and are also really good friends. It was as much a joy to make music with them as it was to hang out and have fun doing it.

And who can say they've had a song written just for them? Not many people. But for the first time ever, I can say that. Thanks to the great Marchella Mafrika who wrote **Ascoltami** just for me!

Thanks also, as always, for the support of my friends (especially Gisela Klein, Sara Hahn, and others) and family (Pamela King, Alice Hope, Melissa King-Hope, and David King-Hope) for putting up with me and helping me with all the decisions involved.



THE ARTISTS



MICHAEL HOPE is an award-winning vocalist who loves to sing for the simple joy of making people happy. A native of Toronto, Michael is a graduate of the prestigious Curtis Institute Of Music in Philadelphia. In addition to making music, he enjoys watching a lot of TV, fixing his own cars, and going to work every day as the 2nd bassoonist of The Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra. You can write to Michael and follow his activities by visiting his website at www.michaelhope.net

*On this album, Michael sings into a classic **Neumann U87ai** condenser microphone. He performs live with the **Shure Super 55 Deluxe** vocal microphone (pictured on the cover of this CD) and a silver **Neumann KMS 105**.*



Pianist **CODY OBST** shares his passion for music by giving over fifty concerts and public presentations annually. Currently, Cody is the Co-Director of the Calgary Multicultural Choir, Music Director at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Conductor of the Calgary Women's Chorus, and Board Member of the Canadian Voice Care Foundation. Cody's goal is to bring joy in music-making to all those he comes in contact with! In the rare times when he isn't making music, you can find him at the movies, eating at a new restaurant, Twittering, Facebooking, reading, or curling. You can visit Cody on-line at www.codyobst.com

*On this album, Cody plays on Hexagon Studio's venerable **7-foot Blüthner grand piano** (reportedly Oscar Peterson's favourite instrument when it resided at its original home at the Banff Centre).*



Flutist **SARAH GIECK** holds a Bachelor of Music Degree from the University of Calgary, a Master of Music Degree from the Royal Northern College of Music located in Manchester, England, and an Artist Diploma from the University of Cincinnati. Sarah has worked closely with many of the world's leading flute teachers including Lorna McGhee, William Bennett, Dr. Bradley Garner and Peter Lloyd. In the summer of 2009 Sarah was a member of the National Youth Orchestra of Canada where she worked with Camille Churchfield.

*Sarah plays a 2008 handmade 10k gold **Brannen** flute with a 14k gold **Sheridan** head joint.*



Violist **MEGAN SINGER** is originally from Halifax, Nova Scotia. She began studying the violin at the age of four with Yvonne DeRoller, completed two years of university at the Cleveland Institute of Music under the tutelage of Linda Cerone and David Updegraff, then graduated from Dalhousie University in 2003 with combined BSC honours in Neuroscience and Music, studying the viola with Professor Philippe Djokic. Megan then traveled west to continue her viola studies with David Harding at the University of British Columbia, where she graduated with a Master of Music Degree. She moved to Calgary in 2006 to play five seasons with The Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra.

*Megan's viola is a 1925 **Vitali** (originally owned by Megan's grandmother).*

THE ARTISTS (CONTINUED...)



MARCHELLA MAFRICA, Composer and Lyricist of "Ascoltami" (Track # 3)

Marchella Mafrika was born and raised in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Composing since age nine, she attended the University of Calgary after receiving the prestigious John De Waal Music Scholarship in 2003. Today, her compositions are performed for a variety of Canadian audiences as she continues to express herself through music, and by taking care of her community in her role as a professional fund raiser for The United Way.

"I love that music has the ability to unify different people in a common pursuit of appreciation and beauty ... A special thank you to Michael for his support on this project and for being all-around awesome!"



MICHAEL'S THOUGHTS ON THE SONGS (WITH TRANSLATIONS)

1. **Nella Fantasia** (Music by Ennio Morricone, Lyrics by Chiara Ferrau)

This is one of the great melodies written in the last fifty years. I am so thankful that Sarah Brightman convinced Ennio Morricone to allow *Gabriel's Oboe* (from "The Mission") to be adapted into a song. The result is this gorgeous creation. And the first of three songs on this CD that imagines what a better world looks like.

<p><i>Nella fantasia io vedo un mondo giusto, Lì tutti vivono in pace e in onestà. Io sogno d'anime che sono sempre libere, Come le nuvole che volano, Pien' d'umanità in fondo all'anima.</i></p>	<p>In my fantasy I see a just world Where everyone lives in peace and honesty I dream of souls that are always free Like clouds that float Full of humanity in the depths of the soul</p>
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<p><i>Nella fantasia io vedo un mondo chiaro Lì anche la notte è meno oscura. Io sogno d'anime che sono sempre libere, Come le nuvole che volano. Pien' d'umanità.</i></p>	<p>In my fantasy I see a bright world Where each night there is less darkness I dream of souls that are always free Like clouds that float Full of humanity</p>
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<p><i>Nella fantasia esiste un vento caldo, Che soffia sulle città, come amico. Io sogno d'anime che sono sempre libere, Come le nuvole che volano, Pien' d'umanità in fondo all'anima.</i></p>	<p>In my fantasy exists a warm wind That breathes into the city, like a friend I dream of souls that are always free Like clouds that float Full of humanity in the depths of the soul</p>
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2. Hallelujah (Words and Music by Leonard Cohen)

When I first started singing this song, I realized why it's been covered so many times by so many singers. Not only does it have a great melody with a beautiful arch, but it is one of those songs which are really, really kind to the human voice; every time I sing it I feel like I am giving my voice a treat. Almost what it's like to drive a well designed car. The lyrics are also fascinating to explore. Leonard Cohen apparently wrote 85 verses to it (each one is a short story in itself). In our version, I've included the four verses that intrigue me the most...

A word about the amazing Sarah Gieck: I have been playing with Sarah for several years now in the woodwind section of the Calgary Philharmonic. I always knew she was a good flutist. However, until we worked together on this project, I had no idea she was this good. Listen for her terrific solo in the middle, which really shows how much she likes this song too!

3. Ascoltami (Words and Music by Marchella Mafrika)

I first worked with Marchella Mafrika when she was the Co-ordinator of Volunteers at the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra. At the time of this writing, she is a professional fundraiser at the United Way. She is also one of those well-rounded people who have a rich education: she possesses a degree in music composition from the University of Calgary!

Marchella is a very versatile composer, and I admire her pieces for their depth and approachability. She has written one other piece for me: "Missy The Dog", a miniature duet for Flute and Bassoon that I have played in homeless shelters, special-needs daycare centres and children's hospitals all over the Calgary. It's pretty fun.

Over coffee one day, I asked Marchella if she would write me a song. She agreed, but I told her I wanted it to be three things: 1) partially in Italian (to celebrate Marchella's Italian heritage – and because Italian rocks!) 2) spiritually themed, and 3) awesome...

As you can hear, Marchella came through on all three counts. (especially # 3)

Marchella has this to say about "Ascoltami": "This song is an exploration of faith, and the idea of a higher power asking us to be kind to one another, and most importantly, to **listen**".

<i>Ascoltami se c'è crede</i>	Listen to me if you believe
<i>Amore qui senza fine</i>	That eternal love lies here
<i>Quando la fede si perde</i>	And when faith is lost,
<i>Chiama il mio nome</i>	call my name.
<i>E quando lo trovi presto sarete Liberi</i>	and when you find it, you will soon be free
<i>Ascoltami...</i>	Listen to me...

4. **Caro Gesu Bambino** (Piero Quinto Cariaggi/Piero Soffici)

This Italian Christmas carol was originally from the Festival Zecchino d'Oro of 1960, and was recorded by the Piccolo Coro dell'Antoniano. This song stayed on and it is still being played all over the world and has been translated into many languages. It was also covered by Italian-American singer Frankie Avalon in 1962, as well as by Andrea Bocelli.

One day in late 2010, I was watching TV with my mom, and while we were channel surfing, we stumbled across a PBS special on which Andrea Bocelli was singing *Caro Gesu Bambino* with David Foster at the piano. I knew instantly that I had to include it in my repertoire (some songs are just like that). I have since loved this little Italian Christmas Carol, and how it depicts the desire that all Christians have to be closer to God.

<p><i>Caro Gesù Bambino, tu che sei tanto buono, fammi questo piacer, lascia una volta il cielo e vieni a giocare, a giocare con me.</i></p>	<p>Dear Baby Jesus, you who are so good, do me a favour leave heaven one day and come to play with me.</p>
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<p><i>Lo sai che il babbo è povero ed io non ho giocattoli, sono un bambino buono come lo fosti tu.</i></p>	<p>You know my father is poor and that I have no toys, I'm a good boy like you were yourself.</p>
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<p><i>Vedrai però se vieni noi ci divertiremo anche senza balocchi, vieni Bambin Gesù.</i></p>	<p>You'll see though that if you'd come in we will have fun even without toys Come, Baby Jesus, come..</p>
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5. **Be Thou My Vision** (Traditional)

I love things that have stood the test of time, and have proven themselves to be worthy of their popularity. Especially songs. *Be Thou My Vision* was written in the 8th Century! And even today it is consistently on everyone's top 10 list of favourite hymns. For this CD, we've taken the melody and given it a little bit of sweep. My favourite part of this recording is how the viola obbligato gives the setting a certain epic feeling that complements the depth of the lyrics.

6. **Great Is Thy Faithfulness** (Traditional)

Another top 10 hymn. Rendered beautifully here with Cody's great stylings. When discussing repertoire for this CD, I asked Cody for ideas about a piano solo or two. He suggested this, and am I ever glad he did! Enjoy.

7. **Be Not Afraid** (Robert J. Dufford)

I first started singing this song at memorial services several years ago. I always liked the references to nature's wrath (raging waters, barren deserts), and how the chorus comes in with a wave of reassurance.

8. **Morning Has Broken** (Traditional)

I have been listening to this hymn since I was a kid. It's funny how many people don't realize that it's a hymn at all (I think we can all thank Cat Stevens for that!). But that just goes to prove how this song has a universal message for everyone: that each day is an awesome (really!) gift and a potential miracle waiting to happen.

9. **As The Deer** (Martin Nystrom)

This great little song is a bit of a challenge in that it is so short. And to attempt to expand it could spoil how its form is perfect and compact. We've given the lyric a bit (just a bit) of bloom with another great Cody Obst piano solo in the middle.

10. **I Believe** (Eric Levi/Yvan Cassar)

This is the second of three songs on our album about a better world. Years ago, my friend, Reverend Jennifer Ferguson asked me to sing it at a service at Living Spirit United Church in Calgary. I had never heard this song, but when I checked it out, I knew it was for me. Thanks for the tip, Jennifer. I sing it at almost all my performances now!

11. **The Lord's My Shepherd (Brother James' Air)** (Traditional)

This is the second solo Cody suggested. It's the alternate melody to the 23rd psalm (the other being the "Crimond"), and it offers a tenderness that really makes the listener connect to the scripture in a very gentle way. Tip: read or speak the 23rd Psalm (see appendix on page 8 of these notes) to yourself as you listen to Cody play, and see how it makes you feel!

12. **Simple Gifts** (Traditional)

The viola is a remarkable instrument. It sounds happy and sad at the same time, and poetic in a way that is subtly different from its sister instruments, the 'cello and the violin. This setting of the classic Shaker melody showcases all of that. When we recorded this together, Megan and I were really "in the zone". And with her perfect intonation and impeccable musicianship, she sure makes me sound good. Which is a good thing, because while this setting (with its serene and transparent texture) is certainly "simple", it is not in the least bit easy...

13. **Here I Am, Lord (I The Lord of Sea and Sky)** (Dan S. Schutte/arr. Mark Hayes)

Some trivia: A 2008 survey conducted by the United Methodist Church found this hymn to be the second favourite hymn (right behind "Amazing Grace") of the survey. And – a poll conducted by the National Association of Pastoral Musicians found among its members that "Here I Am, Lord" came in second among "songs that make a difference". I am not surprised one bit by this hymn's popularity. (It's also one of my Mom's faves...)

Two things to listen for: 1) how Mark Hayes' brilliant setting makes you actually feel the "sea, sky, snow and rain", and 2) more of Cody's great playing at the beginning.

14. **For Good (From "Wicked")** (Stephen Schwartz)

Okay – so you might ask: "What is a Broadway showtune doing on an album of spiritual songs?" Well, to me, this song is all about anyone who has made a difference in your life. It's about how being close to someone can be transformative, and how that transformative effect can make us realize how much we love the people around us.

Like so many songs that I sing – I first heard this song when we played it in a Broadway Pops concert at The Calgary Philharmonic. Playing the 2nd bassoon part was fun enough. But from that moment on, I knew I had to find a way and a place to sing it. I was so happy to find a place for it on this album. This is most the beautiful song I know which is built on the theme of friendship. And the ingenious double entendre of the last line is one of the most brilliant displays of lyrical wordplay that I have ever seen.

This recording is historic in a fun kind of way: It's the first recording of it sung as a duet with a viola! The viola is the friendliest instrument I know, by the way, and if a viola could talk, I'm sure that the lyrics to this song are the first words it would say!

15. The Irish Blessing (Joyce Eilers Bacak)

About a month before Megan and I played our first concert together, I asked her if she had any song requests. She said she'd love it if we could do "The Irish Blessing" by Joyce Eilers Bacak. Megan sang this song with her high school choir and became very fond of it. I can see why. I'm happy to have this song in my repertoire because just the other day I sang it to a friend who was spending his last days at a Hospice. It was perfect. What a tune, and what great words...

BONUS TRACK

16. The Prayer (David Foster, Tony Renis, Carole Bayer Sager, Alberto Testa)

Back in 2002 I recorded *The Prayer* on my Christmas album, "Silent Night". As much as I love that miniature version with harp, I have always wanted to re-record it with a little bit more sweep and drama. This album allowed me that opportunity!

This version also has the uniqueness of being a duet with flute, and the vocal lines made so familiar by Céline Dion's stylings are taken to a transcendent level with Sarah's delicate approach. Cody takes the orchestration and makes it his own with an epic performance.

The Prayer is the third in our trilogy of songs on this album which are about a bright future. One line of lyrics resonates with me over and over again:

"The strength that you give us is the desire that everyone finds love around and in ourselves."

To me, this song is a modern classic, and is one of the greatest pop duets ever written.

*La luce che tu dai nel cuore restera.
A ricordarci che l'eterna stella sei.
Nella mia preghiera quanta fede c'e.*

The light that you give will remain in our hearts and remind us that you are the eternal star. In my prayer there is so much faith...

*Sogniamo un mondo senza piu violenza,
un mondo di giustizia e di speranza.
Ognuno dia la mano al suo vicino,
simbolo di pace ...di fraternita.*

We dream of a world without any violence a world of justice and hope. Everyone gives a hand to his neighbor symbol of peace...of brotherhood.

*La forza che ci dai e' il desiderio che
ognuno trovi amor intorno e dentro se.*

The strength that you give us is the desire that everyone finds love around and in ourselves.

*E la fede che hai acceso in noi
Sento che ci salvera.*

And the faith that you have lit in us I feel will save us.



APPENDIX: The 23rd Psalm

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures.
He leads me beside still waters.

He restores my soul.
He leads me in paths of righteousness
For his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death
I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

