

# RENDERINGS

ALL CHARTS CONDUCTED & ARRANGED BY CHUCK OWEN  
PERFORMED BY THE WDR BIG BAND, COLOGNE

**1. KNIFE'S EDGE** [6:05]

*Chuck Owen*  
Paul Heller - Tenor  
Andy Haderer - Trumpet  
Hans Dekker - Drums

**2. ...AND YOUR POINT IS?** [8:48]

*Chuck Owen*  
Andy Hunter - Trombone  
Gabor Bolla - Tenor Sax  
Billy Test - Organ  
Mattis Cederberg - Tuba  
Hans Dekker - Drums

**3. OF MYSTERY & BEAUTY** [10:54]

*Karolina Strassmayer*  
John Goldsby - Bass  
Karolina Strassmayer - Sax  
Sara Caswell - Violin

**4. THIS LOVE OF MINE** [10:23]

*Sol Parker/Hank Sanicola*  
Billy Test - Piano  
Paul Heller - Sax  
Ruud Breuls - Trumpet

**5. FALL CALLS** [9:37]

*John Goldsby*  
Philipp Brämsswig - Guitar  
Karolina Strassmayer - Alto Sax  
Andy Hunter - Trombone

**6. ARABIAN NIGHTS** [11:42]

*Chick Corea*  
Sara Caswell - Violin  
Philipp Brämsswig - Guitar  
Johan Hörlén - Alto Sax

**7. A RIDGE AWAY** [8:57]

*Chuck Owen*  
Ruud Breuls - Trumpet  
Billy Test - Piano

**8. CANOE** [6:36]

*Johan Hörlén*  
Johan Hörlén - Alto Sax  
Ludwig Nuss - Trombone

TOTAL TIME: 73:02

# RENDERINGS

## CHUCK OWEN

### AND THE WDR BIG BAND

WITH SPECIAL GUEST SARA CASWELL



**WDR** THE COLOGNE BROADCASTS

© A Westdeutsche Rundfunk  
Cologne Production, 2020, 2021

# RENDERINGS

## DEF. 1. A DEPICTION, INTERPRETATION, OR PERSPECTIVE 2. THE ACT OR INSTANCE OF PERFORMING A PIECE OF MUSIC

When I discovered the dual definition of “Renderings” above, I knew I had found the title for this project! Yes, I rediscovered the joy (and challenge!) of being an arranger - or re-interpreter - rather than the principal composer, if you will. More importantly, it was the immediacy, imagination, sensitivity, and musical vision of the band’s “rendering” of my lifeless notes on a page, while most of the world was still in Covid hibernation, that defines this recording.

When Covid altered the timing of this project - my first album with this internationally renowned group of inspirational musicians - I was concerned that its likely release might now be in close proximity to that of “Within Us”, the 2021 project I had planned with my own Jazz Surge. An embarrassment of riches, to be sure; but my enthusiasm for both was such that I wasn’t eager to delay either. So, it became imperative in my mind to distinguish the two in some meaningful way; ensuring each had its own unique character and concept (as much for my own writing as for the listener’s perception).

In a sense, the idea for “Renderings” was born when Karolina Strassmayer, WDR’s evocative alto saxophonist asked if I’d be willing to arrange one of

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Huge, huge thanks to the wonderful musicians that comprise the WDR Big Band!! I love the opportunity to work with this uber-talented ensemble; but am even more privileged to get to know them as friends!

It was an absolute delight to be able to have Sara Caswell join me in Cologne as special guest soloist for several of these pieces as well as a wonderful dinner companion! Her violin has become incredibly important in my writing. So much so, it was a challenge to divorce myself from it for the second session!!

Big thanks to Johan Hörlén for providing special wardrobe assistance during my last visit!! It could have gotten a little gamey in the studio without his flannels!

## THANKS TO:

- Arnd Richter at WDR for standing by this project even in the midst of all the chaos and insecurity generated by Covid .
- Darby Christensen at Summit Records for his ongoing support & partnership, and
- Ann Braithwaite (Braithwaite & Katz) for her tireless efforts to put me and this project in the very best light!

## PERSONNEL

### WOODWINDS

Johan Hörlén  
Karolina Strassmayer  
Gabor Bolla - Cuts #1,2,5,7, & 8  
Olivier Peters - Cuts #3,4, & 6  
Paul Heller  
Jens Neufang

### TRUMPETS

Wim Both  
Andy Haderer  
Rob Bruynen  
Ruud Breuls

## CREDITS

**RECORDED:** July 1-4, 2019 - WDR Funkhaus Studios, Cologne, Germany  
May 3-7, 2021 - WDR Funkhaus Studios, Cologne, Germany

**EXECUTIVE PRODUCER:** Arnd Richter

**RECORDING PRODUCER:** Markus Mittermeyer

**RECORDING ENGINEERS:** Walter Platte, Dirk Franken

**COVER ART:** Dan Traynor for MAMA Records

### TROMBONE

Ludwig Nuss  
Raphael Klemm  
Andy Hunter  
Mattis Cederberg

### RHYTHM SECTION

Billy Test - Piano, Organ  
Philipp Brämswig - Guitar  
John Goldsby - Bass  
Hans Dekker - Drums

**SPECIAL GUEST:** Sara Caswell



her compositions for an upcoming feature project. I was quite flattered and honored to be asked; but I quickly became aware that it had been a long time since I had taken on arranging anyone else's music... the last instance 8 years earlier when working with tenor saxophonist/composer Michael Bladt for a project with the Aarhus Jazz Orchestra and then maybe another 4 before that when producing "The Comet's Tail" and re-examining a quartet of Michael Brecker compositions.

After some initial nervousness about how Karolina might respond to my trying to flesh out the "mystery" aspect of her gorgeous tune, "Of Mystery & Beauty" (particularly my use of crystal glasses and a tone row to create an otherworldly frame for its melody), I found myself invigorated by the exploration of the new "world" she provided through her composition as well as the challenge of fashioning my own home within it.

While working on this chart, I received word that the planned initial recording date with the band had been moved up almost 9 months (!!)- to the summer of 2019! With a full teaching load and an international conference to produce later that spring my writing time was limited. So, with no compelling "narrative" for the album project yet in mind, I decided to use the opportunity to finally undertake a big band arrangement of the old Sinatra/Tommy Dorsey classic "This Love of Mine" based on a small group chart I had written some 20 years earlier. I also thought that revising an earlier arrangement I had done of Chick Corea's "Arabian Nights"





specifically for the WDR group (and to feature Sara Caswell on violin) might be fun and a great foil to the other charts. I didn't yet see it... but the concept was emerging!

Covid took root and, of course, all plans were being rescheduled and re-evaluated almost monthly - no one really knew which side was up. Then, as hope for emerging from our pandemic cocoons was barely beginning to take root, I suddenly found myself with plans to record both the Surge album and the remainder of this project with the WDR big band less than a month apart from each other!! While the concept for "Within Us" was focused on the band's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary (and had been for some time) - what about the WDR project? How was I to differentiate it??

The answer came quickly and with absolute clarity. I could expand on and totally embrace the somewhat unplanned focus of writing arrangements - a prospect that, after years of primarily focusing on original works, I found incredibly exhilarating. To that end, I invited other WDR band members to submit some of their compositions (having enjoyed working on Karolina's piece so much). Through John Goldsby's lovely waltz "Fall Calls" I strove to evoke a sense of the most complex of seasons (also my favorite!), autumn. Having recently retired from my professorial post after 40 years and reflecting on that as well, it was almost cathartic to try and portray the range of emotions and colors. Similarly, as a formerly avid canoeist, Johan Hörlén's "Canoe" captured my interest immediately. However, it was the

opportunity to return to my “roots” and reframe this delightful medium swing tune that really was impossible to resist! I can’t remember the last time I wrote a woodwind soli and a straight ahead shout chorus!! What a blast!

I also thought it might be fun to try and “re-imagine” some of my own works. “And Your Point Is?...” had been recently composed and recorded by “ReSurgence” (my sextet); but I found it ripe for expansion and loved the inclusion of Billy Test’s organ as well as Mattis Cederberg’s tuba. “A Ridge Away”, as the 4<sup>th</sup> movement of my River Runs concerto, presented the opposite challenge - needing to “reduce” it from its full orchestral setting for big band. Finally, I couldn’t resist the opportunity to write at least one new original work for the band. “Knife’s Edge”, named for the somewhat treacherous trail leading to Mt. Katahdin, in Maine is the result.

