



Dee Bell

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ALBUM ART

Rohmana D'Arezzo
In Memory of Noor
www.goddessarts.com

Why Silva • Bell • Elation? • Dee Bell

Silver Bells was the Bell Family signature Christmas song. It was a tradition in our family holiday jam sessions. Because of this, the merging of the two names Marcos Silva and Dee Bell seemed tunelessly obvious. Elation was the result of the Silva Bell musical partnership.

From the first recording with Stan Getz to the present, the rhythms and music of Brazil have infused new tonal colors and energy into the music that enlivens my spirit. Stan and Eddie Duran introduced me to those rhythms and prompted deeper exploration into the music of Antonio Carlos Jobim, Ivan Lins, Maria Bethania, Simone, Dori and Nana Caymmi, Joyce, Toninho Horta, Chico Buarque, Djavan, Gilberto Gil, Caetano Veloso, Elis Regina to mention a few. Maria Marquez, a contemporary of mine also living and performing in San Francisco in the 80s, generously made a tape for me of these artists and several others that further inspired. Bless you Maria! This music has sustained my spirit through the last thirty years of life's crushing waves and lean times.

The first two Concord recordings *Let There Be Love* and *One by One* were successfully acclaimed, then the waves began to hit. By the time the third recording, *Sagacious Grace*, was finally revived from certain death by recording engineers Bud Spangler and Dan Feizli, the heart of the recording and my musical director, Al Plank, had, to quote James Gavin in *Silva • Bell • Elation's* liner notes, "moved on to the next world." The dilemma of how to present a CD release show without the master musician left me stymied. And then I met Marcos Silva.

Twenty-two years after making *Sagacious Grace*, it became clear that I was free to recreate this collection of songs. Then came the thought that fusing the Dee Bell white, laid-back, swing-singing way of floating over time signatures, could be a complete Yin and Yang expression if these songs and others were sung over the perfectly executed rhythms that had always brought joy to my heart; additionally enhanced with electric bass played like a guitar in the style of Jaco Pastorius. And yes, I have recorded in Portuguese, but there are so many terrific singers from Brazil, who was I to continue to compete in that arena beyond what I little I had already offered to the public ear? Why not "do it my way" in English, cushioned and embraced by the rhythms and tonal colors I loved, with the luxury of the lyric poetry of my native language. Marcos Silva's skills as instructor of Brazilian music at Berkeley's jazz school, as a composer, arranger and producer, along with his experience as former musical director for Flora Purim and Toninho Horta, collectively make Marcos the perfect musician to fulfill this brainchild.

It was an auspicious day in May 2012 when Marcos said yes to the investigation of this idea. Our first meeting was like a musical speed date. In one hour, we moved quickly through about twenty-five songs selected by one or the other of us from my huge book. We were in complete synchronized agreement about which music would and would not work with every single tune. This was quite surprising given that he had to adjust to my "lazy" vocals and I to his precision with the rhythm. I left that meeting floating on air and with the mellifluous cushion of sound Marcos had achieved still delighting my brain. At last, I had met someone whose music and piano voicings touched my heart as deeply as had Al Plank's.

A month and a half later, with only two formal rehearsals, Marcos' trio and I performed a spectacular *Sagacious Grace* CD release show, with a handful of new Silva arrangements of some songs from the album, along with those that included a broad range of beloved songs from the full stretch of my life, and complete with a visual backdrop of images of grace. The joy in the room was a transforming experience for the band and the audience. So much so, that I felt compelled to record it for others. It was and is my "happy thought" to share this joy with a world that is quite in need of "getting back to the garden" before it is too late. The garden of living simply, aligned with nature, and in support of one another as equals in partnering for a healthy, happy world.

And then, the next wave came crashing down when my husband ended up in intensive care for the eight days prior to the scheduled recording date: eight days of zero sleep further impacted by keeping a part-time graphics day job afloat. Two days after Jim came out of the hospital, Marcos' trio and I forged on with the scheduled recording. We laid down the first seven tracks at Fantasy Studios with the extraordinary Alberto Hernandez running the board and Marcos' producing expertise. From that day forward, the *Silva • Bell • Elation* took on its own life and timeline.



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The Songs:

I've Got the World on a String and Nature Boy: Years earlier, after teaching K-2 music, substitute teaching provided extra income and a schedule that matched my son's. I had twice taught Jeff Narell's (Andy's brother) steel pan class. It was enough to illustrate that Andy Narell's mastery with playing jazz scales on that instrument is enough to mystify one's mind. And Andy Narell's *The Hammer* continues to be one of my "desert island" favorite albums. On a long shot I reached out to Andy. He easily agreed to perform on two tracks even though he lives in Paris. Marcos and I put our heads together for the arrangement ideas for *Nature Boy* and *I've Got the World on a String* and Marcos finalized them into magic. We had forged ahead with the original studio booking, even though it was directly on the heels of my husband's hospitalization, because it would be easier for Andy to record at home. He was preparing go on the road for five months. In the end, Andy laid down his part in Trinidad while contributing to a steel pan convention. The Caribbean influence resonates fully within his solos because he was immersed in steel pan music in its native land. Every time I hear Andy, my heart dances with sunny island joy.

Night in the City: Joni Mitchell's music kept me stretching the vocal chords during my college days (...with a little Janis Joplin also tossed in). *Night in the City* was my favorite sing-along song. Marcos jumped at the chance to do something a little different with the arrangement. His Brazilian shuffle chart prompted him to think of Barry Finnerty's guitar style. What a divine thought. Marcos' shifting into a bluesy jazz solo, and Barry Finnerty's added guitar voicings make this song yet another gift of joy. The healing message? To get off of the couch and let live music and the energy of community renew one's soul.

I Will: This song has been part of my repertoire on and off since college bar duo gigs. It was the song that came to mind when singing my husband to wellness the week prior to the session. Marcos and I didn't talk about it. I just threw it in at the last minute. I think Marcos decided we should record this one first because he wanted to calm me down. I was late to the session after smacking my head into the garage door following a rushed trip to the store to accommodate my husband's first full day home from the hospital before I abandoned him for the session. I arrived at Fantasy with a cut forehead and a black eye. The arrangement came into being with the first piano line that flew out of Marcos' enchanted fingers. It is so elegantly understated and yet so abundantly satisfying. When I listened to playback without vocals I realized that every chordal color he chose was perfect. Knowing it was all without any forethought makes it quite special. The beauty of his solo reaches quite deep and complements completely. In the session, it felt as if he read my mind and was singing through, within, and in total harmony with me.

The Face I Love: Tired of the simple songs that are part of the K-2 ordinary music curriculum, I taught my second-graders Marcos Valle's *The Face I Love* so they could learn about syncopation, quarter rests, and give their mothers a present to be ever-remembered. Halloween Trick-or-Treaters that come to my door still remember that song and sing it to me willingly upon realizing they are at "Mrs. B's" house. Needless to say, they get extra treats. This is the song that brought me "face-to-face" with Marcos Silva. I followed him in a variety show, which prompted him to ask, as I walked offstage, "How do you know this song? Marcos Valle is a friend of mine." Marcos Silva plays this song the way it should be played. My vocal time suspension with the melodic line on this tune may likely bewilder those who learned it from me in school.

S'Wonderful: Eddie Duran wrote an arrangement of this song for our first performances together following the release of *Let There Be Love*. It is an effortless bossa with a brief key change in it. Marcos turned this into a samba. I call this a band tune. To diversify, I love having a tune or two on every vocal album that is more about the band than the singer. This is one of those tunes. It is just plain fun.

Midnight Mood: I have been singing my lyrics to Joe Zawinul's song ever since they came to mind standing on a local California beach, flanked by my husband and son, with a full moon at night on my fortieth birthday. It was a difficult task to track down where to obtain permission for those lyrics. I tried off and on over the years. At last the contact information appeared in the BMI database. Unfortunately, we were a week away from recording it. A forthcoming approval seemed a likely chance based on feedback from Claus Ogerman's New York representative for Helios music. We went ahead with the recording. The merging of Marcos' playing with the heartfelt lyrics had the potential to become a classic recording. His solo on the track is one of the most beautiful piano solos I have ever heard. I did not think it was possible, but it touched me more deeply even than Al Plank's solo on *You Can't Go Home Again* on *Sagacious Grace*. Both solos represent the embodiment of each song's intention. Helios is a German-based company, and they made their decision without even hearing the song. A flat and cruel "no", even though I intended to waive all of my rights to the recorded lyric version for their full profit. Another crushing wave, because the merger of lyric, melodic



line and piano on this song was quintessential. We considered remaking the vocal part a saxophone instrumental. Instead, I decided to hum and oo as if I were playing my clarinet. Alberto, Marcos and I called the vocal version Christmas and the hummed version Halloween. With Helios' denial, we were forced to go with the Halloween version, which became a mystical meditation of sound framing Marcos' beautiful solo. The missing lyric is:

<p><i>The waves, the night, the stars in your eyes. a touch so deep, I'm filled with surprise. The waves roll in and take my breath away, this starry night speaks love in every way. I'm inside out with words that never say What is this Midnight Mood?</i></p>	<p><i>The mist, the sand, the soft gentle breeze, caress my soul with mystery and ease. A distant song is winging through the trees. I'm lost to all that lives and breathes. I'm inside out with words that never say What is this midnight Mood?</i></p>
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With hospital bills to pay and busy schedules for both of us, the next recording session was put off until the following April when we completed the roster of songs.

Harvest Moon: Marcos grappled with this arrangement for a long time. He had carte blanche to do whatever he could to turn this simple pop tune, that was Neil Young's signature song, into a jazzy version. I told him the sound of a train came to mind and he built on the idea. Marcos' arrangement took form in the middle of the night when he wrote a "four brother's" style saxophone part in an upbeat version of what became our mutual favorite on the album. The execution is energetic, sweet, sassy, at once simple and complex, and fun. Marcos brought in his student, 17-yr-old Chris Sullivan to play the four sax parts. His solo has the tonality of Jan Gabarek. In the final hour, Marcos added an "organ" part to add a sustain to the driving undercarriage. This song had all at Fantasy Studios vibrating with the happiness of it.

The World is Falling Down: I saw Abbey Lincoln perform live in San Francisco in 1979 and was mesmerized. From then on my performances were sprinkled with her compositions. *The World is Falling Down* came later and at a time when people needed hope. It is bittersweet and about the loss of fellow musicians, but with the suggestion of how to get through hard times with the help of each other. I wanted to sing this for Abbey and for all those late great musicians who have contributed to the well being of the world. To set the prayer-like stage for the tribute, the song begins with the Candomble' rhythm used in reflection of the trance movement of a Brazilian religion. Barry Finnerty's "weeping" guitar solo provides the release of emotional loss that redirects humanity back toward the hope suggested in "hold my hand."

Dreamer: I threw this song in at 2am as we were about to wrap our full-band session. Tired as we all were, everyone felt like giving it a go. It is another band tune. It is uncomplicated, lovely and is our take on Antonio Carlos Jobim's original arrangement. My second turn with the vocal is an intentional nod to Jobim's *One Note Samba*.

Beijo Partida-Broken Kiss: Toninho Horta's *Diamond Land* album has been the prime music that heals my soul in rough times. I played *Diamond Land* to clear my head one day when I was looking for another song to record with Marcos. Joyce's English lyrics aligned me to the tune prompting a call to Marcos. As it turns out, this composition has been part of Marcos' repertoire since he was on the road with Toninho. What luck. Marcos' mastery of the song is obvious and Scott's "guitar-like" electric bass as he channels Jaco is entralling. The pure beauty of *Broken Kiss*, apart from the gorgeous melodic line, is that it provides a vehicle for healing that can bring the listener back to joy after processing this song.

From the onset of becoming a professional, music has for me forever been about healing the soul. Music is the mystical extension of experimentation with obstetrics, midwifery, nutrition and massage that have each contributed to the variety of experiences that have blessed my life. When the band and vocal operate as one, in sync with the audience, it attunes everyone's vibration.

The intention of this CD is to provide music to lift spirits, to heal from loss, and in doing so, provide a financial foundation for a series of teaching recordings so that all K-2 classrooms can begin their day with music. If good fortune smiles, perhaps Marcos and I will also follow it with another recording. This one is indeed a musical partnership full of *Silva • Bell • Elation*.

CD COVER ART: The cover art is titled *Memory of Noor*, and was painted by **Rohmana D'Arezzo** whose visionary art has been published nationally. This was painted in memory of Noor Inayat Khan, a scientist and the daughter of the famous European Sufi teacher Hazrat Inayat Khan. Noor means "light" or "light of wisdom" or "light through the darkness". Wikipedia has more on Noor. She was betrayed during the second World War and was executed at Dachau. Her story is quite fascinating, especially given that she died at the age of 30.