

THE ANITA KERR QUARTET



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RECORDINGS

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THE Velvet Voices

ANITA KERR QUARTET

The Anita Kerr Quartet - The SESAC Recordings by Richard Weize

1. date; 2. location; 3. personnel • 4. discography opus number;
5. title; 6. Sesac releases; 7. composer/writer

**February 24, 1959 (13:30 - 18:30) • Bradley Film & Recording Studio,
804 16th Avenue South, Nashville, Tennessee; Producer: Owen
Bradley**

Anita Kerr, Dorothy Ann 'Dottie' Dillard, Louis Dean Nunley, William
Guilford Wright, jr; Harold Ray Bradley: guitar; Walter L. 'Hank'
'Sugarfoot' Garland: guitar; Bob L. Moore: bass; Douglas Kirkham:
drums

1. **Whistle Your Blues Away**N 2601
(Howard)
2. **Swing Little Indians, Swing**N 2601
(Worth)
3. **Strange Little Melody**N 2601
(Levy)
4. **Greensleeves**N 2601
(arr. Anita Kerr)
5. **Pop Goes The Weasel**N 2601
(arr. Anita Kerr)
6. **Song In The Night**.....N 2601
(Coy - Wynert)

**February 25, 1959 (18:45-23:00) • Bradley Film & Recording Studio,
804 16th Avenue South, Nashville, Tennessee; Producer: Owen
Bradley**

Anita Kerr, Dorothy Ann 'Dottie' Dillard, Louis Dean Nunley, William
Guilford Wright, jr; Harold Ray Bradley: guitar; Walter L. 'Hank'
'Sugarfoot' Garland: guitar; Bob L. Moore: bass; Douglas Kirkham:
drums; Marvin H. Hughes: piano; Dorothy S. Withrow: cello; Wilda
Tinsley: viola; Cleis Bays: violin; Howard Carpenter: violin; W. Ovid
Collins, jr: violin; Solie Isaac Fott: violin; Lillian Vann Hunt: violin;
John Kline: violin; Jane Morris: violin; Vernal Richardson: violin;
Michael Semanituky: violin; Dorothy Walker: violin; Owen Bradley:
leader

7. **Unless You're In Love**N 2602
(Louis O'Connell, Jr.)
8. **In Love With A Memory**N 2602
(Tschaikowsky - Louis O'Connell, Jr.)
9. **La Mirada**N 2602
(Hecht)
10. **Blue Interlude**.....N 2602
(Razaf - Lawrence - Finke)
11. **I Took The Blues Out Of Tomorrow**N 2602
(Day - Hecht)
12. **You're Here Again**N 2602
(Keller)



THE **Velvet Voices** ANITA KERR QUARTET

During the late fifties and early sixties, Anita Kerr was one of the principal architects behind the easy-listening Nashville Sound. Perhaps best-known for helming her prolific vocal quartet, Kerr was also a skilled orchestral arranger who created lush backdrops behind such country crossover artists as Eddy Arnold, Jim Reeves, Brenda Lee, Roy Orbison and the Browns.

Born in Memphis on October 31, 1927, Anita Jean Grilli was the daughter of two Italian immigrants who owned a neighborhood grocery. Her mother, Sofia Grilli, was also a trained contralto with a twice-weekly radio show on WREC.

Starting piano lessons at age four, Anita's skills developed quickly. At age nine she was the pipe organist for her church; soon afterwards she wrote arrangements for its choir. In 1941 she recruited two friends to form a vocal trio. Billing themselves as the Grilli Sisters, they became a popular feature on her mother's radio show. The following year Anita became WREC's staff pianist, juggling her broadcasting chores with her studies.

Unable to afford college, she joined her older brother's Memphis jazz combo after her high school graduation. Eager for a career in music,

she moved to Nashville in 1948, taking the professional surname of her first husband. Ekeing out a living by playing piano in local night spots, Kerr began seeking vocalists for a professional quintet. Her initial efforts impressed WSM executives, who recruited Kerr to be choral director for its 'Sunday Down South' broadcasts. Veteran producer Owen Bradley took notice of this new group, which had expanded to eight members. He asked Kerr to arrange two sacred selections for an upcoming Red Foley session. *Our Lady Of Fatima*, which credited both Foley and the newly christened Anita Kerr Singers, reached No. 16 on 'Billboard's' pop chart in 1950. Bradley signed the group to Decca the following year. The singers also landed a slot on the NBC network portion of the Grand Ole Opry.

Session work came slowly but steadily during the next five years. Various singers went in and out of the group, three of whom became key members of the classic 1955-65 Nashville quartet: tenor Gil Wright in 1949; baritone Louis Nunley in 1953; and alto Dottie Dillard in 1955.

Kerr was a catalyst for country music's evolution from honky-tonk and Western swing into a more mainstream, uptown sound. Many uncredited



string arrangements on early Nashville Sound productions were actually Kerr scores. In 1955 her singers handled about eight sessions each week; as demand for her services grew, that number rose to between twelve and eighteen per week. By some estimates, the Anita Kerr Singers' distinctive soft vocal harmonies appeared on about twenty-five percent of the recordings made in Nashville during the early sixties.

In 1956 the Anita Kerr Singers won first place on CBS-TV's 'Arthur Godfrey's TalentScouts'. Impressed by its fresh vitality, Godfrey booked the singers – now pared down to a quartet – on his daily radio and television show for two weeks of every six. Two years later they backed Jim Reeves on his Nashville-based daily radio show.

The quartet's fortunes were still on the rise in 1959 when SESAC approached Owen Bradley about adding the Anita Kerr Singers to its radio transcription roster. The group was already known to SESAC from its session dates backing with Chet Atkins and Faron Young. The first Kerr SESAC session featured a small rhythm section headed by Hank Garland; a second added pianist Marvin Hughes and a twelve-piece string section. Although Bradley was credited as leader, the



vocal and instrumental arrangements are almost certainly Kerr's.

In 1961 the Anita Kerr Singers signed with RCA Victor, although the quartet continued free-lancing for other labels. She also arranged and recorded material for RCA Camden's popular budget-priced 'Living Voices' albums.

Kerr's decade of serving as a de facto producer for Decca and RCA Victor finally paid off in 1962, when Chet Atkins offered her a staff A&R position with RCA Nashville. In 1964 her quartet joined Atkins and Jim Reeves in an extensive European tour, documented in a Bear Family CD/DVD box set. But by 1965, the workload was taking its toll. After completing sessions on the Grammy®-winning 'We Dig Mancini' album, Kerr told Dillard, Wright and Nunley she would move to Hollywood that summer. Though she encouraged them to join her in California, all three opted to remain in Tennessee.

Forming a new vocal quartet in Los Angeles, Kerr continued writing, arranging and producing albums for RCA, Warner Bros. and Dot. She also partnered with popular poet and singer-songwriter Rod McKuen on a series of thematic easy-listening albums for Warner Bros. Their first



effort, 'The Sea,' was released in 1967. Credited to The San Sebastian Strings, the album sold one million units and spawned twelve sequels during a six-year period. Kerr also served as choral director for the initial season of CBS-TV's 'The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour'.

In 1971 Kerr left Hollywood to resettle in Switzerland, her second husband's native land. She remained active as a writer and arranger into the late '80s, regularly commuting to studios in London, Los Angeles and Nashville. In 1992 the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences presented Kerr with its Governor's Award, recognizing her outstanding contributions to American music.

Though retired from live performances, Kerr continues to create new music at her home studio in Geneva, Switzerland.

Dave Samuelson
 Battle Ground, Indiana
 June 2007

...and more bears RECORDINGS

“designed for repeated listening”



For the very first time you now can acquire – exclusively through ...AND MORE BEARS – the PT Master Recording catalog, formerly known as 'SESAC Transcribed Library'. Extensive parts of this catalog will be available worldwide for downloading through the regular channels and platforms, as well as CD-on-demand albums.

The most important point for music lovers and collectors is the material's exclusiveness: the music was unavailable elsewhere.

The musicians and band-leaders were given studio time to record exclusive sessions of extra songs. Successful artists liked SESAC because it meant some extra money. From the very beginning, the repertoire was only available on a loan basis for radio stations - every month the stations were given 40 cm transcription discs (later LP-sized discs) that were delivered with complete text information for the radio presenters. For DJs, SESAC transcriptions meant interesting and rare material for their audiences. And the sound quality is brilliant, as the recordings took place in some of America's best studios, and outstanding arrangers worked on these sessions.

These recordings were initially produced for SESAC, America's second-oldest copyright society. The library was active from the late 1940s until the early '80s. The rights to the recordings were owned exclusively by the heirs of the SESAC founder and, with a few exceptions, have never been used for vinyl recordings... much less CD.

Highlights of the catalogue include:

- A catalog of more than 7500 songs;
- Exclusive recordings from jazz giants such as Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Woody Herman and many others;
- Ace session musicians and supporting players who were stars in their own right like Alice Coltrane, Nat Adderly, Thad Jones, Kai Winding, Si Zentner, Gary Burton, Andy Williams, Eric Dolphy, Zoot Sims and many, many more;
- Rare and sought after session recordings with Chet Atkins, The Jordanaires, Anita Kerr, Richard Maltby, Tony Mottola, Nathaniel Shilkret, The Stamps Baxter Men, The Statesmen, Webb Pierce and Faron Young;
- Extensive classical repertoire with symphony orchestras.
- 1950s material in categories like Swing, Lounge, Country, Folk, Barbershop, Choir, Cowboy Music, Southern Gospel, Hawaiian, Latin, Marching Bands, Polkas among others.

Go to www.and-more-bears.de to explore the full catalogue and see the latest additions

THE Velvet Voices ANITA KERR QUARTET

- 1. Swing Little Indians, Swing1:57
- 2. Strange Little Melody2:54
- 3. Whistle Your Blues Away2:42
- 4. Greensleeves2:32
- 5. Song In The Night.....1:57
- 6. Pop Goes The Weasel.....2:43
- 7. In Love With A Memory2:39
- 8. Unless You're In Love.....2:50
- 9. La Mirada.....2:13
- 10. You're Here Again2:11
- 11. Blue Interlude2:40
- 12. I Took The Blues Out Of Tomorrow2:06

Original: SESAC N 2601/2602 © 1959

