

# BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION



## Piers Faccini & Vincent Segal

### *Songs of Time Lost*

**Piers Faccini** and **Vincent Segal** met in Paris in the late 1980s and have been friends ever since. ***Songs of Time Lost*** is their first joint album. Using voice, guitar and cello and a variety of languages (including English, Neapolitan dialect and Creole), the album brings together original compositions, traditional songs and some covers. “It feels like a reunion,” says Vincent, “even though we never really lost touch over the years.”

At the time of their original meeting, Piers was a painter and student at the Paris Beaux-Arts and Vincent had just left the Conservatoire. Vincent was immediately taken by Piers’ vocals: “I wanted to find ways to support his voice, to envelop his words.” Piers later went on to launch his first solo album in 2004, ***Leave No Trace***, which Vincent produced. His many subsequent solo releases have drawn rave reviews from critics around the world, including his most recent album, ***Between Dogs and Wolves***, which was released in North America by Six Degrees Records in 2013. Meanwhile, Vincent started to develop his band **Bumcello**, as well as a myriad of other projects, including the popular album, ***Chamber Music***, recorded with kora master **Ballaké Sissoko**.

“I still like hooking up with Piers in the same way as when we first met,” Vincent says. “We used to play in my tiny apartment in Paris or right on the street. We always had to invent something there and then. We knew what was required. Our repertoire was limited, but it was different and unusual. We’d play anything from **Muddy Waters**, to **Fela Kuti** to **Kodály**. *Songs of Time Lost* is like a direct echo of those early days playing together on street corners in Paris and at the entrance of underground stations.”

Why did the two musicians wait twenty-five years to record a duet project? Piers and Vincent are great believers in things taking the time they need. It takes time to make sense of the world’s music, to refine performance and to absorb the complexity of songs. This is all the more evident on this album, as the duo is revisiting the very songs that originally brought them together. “Reprising music and songs that we love,” **Piers** explains, “is a way for us to see how we can do them justice, with honesty and precision. You have to adapt to them, mold them to yourself, like an item of clothing or a shoe. And for that you need time, a lot of time. If you try and run too fast then you’re probably going to fall flat.”

*Songs of Time Lost* weaves together many musical strands, made up of both artists' diverse influences. There is the blues that Piers first heard from **Mississippi John Hurt** (“Make Me a Pallet on Your Floor”), a composition by **Alain Peters** from the island of La Réunion (“Mangé pou le coeur”), a country waltz by **Townes Van Zandt** (“Quicksilver Daydreams of Maria”) and an instrumental theme by the Berlin composer **Friedrich Holländer** (“Wenn ich mir, was wünschen dürfte”). There are also the melodies of the traditional Neapolitan repertoire, which are favorites of Piers, who is of Anglo-Italian lineage (“Jesce sole,” “Villanella di cenerentola,” “Dicitencello vuje,” “Cicerenella” and the contemporary “Cammina cammina” by **Pino Daniele**).

Both musicians also draw from their own repertoires for the album. This includes two songs dating back to 1996, which Piers originally wrote for a film soundtrack (“A Half of Me” and “The Closing of Our Eyes”). There are also two recent compositions by Vincent (“Cradle to the Grave” and “Everyday Away from You”), which Piers added lyrics to. The first has a New Orleans-style riff that would not feel out of place on an old **Allen Toussaint** record and the latter seems to conjure up the soft refrains of Brazilian guitarist **Luiz Bonfá**.

In short, *Songs of Time Lost* is a fine balance between inspiration and influence. It is the meeting point of the music one inherits from the great masters and the music one writes oneself.

### ***Liner notes by Piers Faccini***

#### **01. JESCE SOLE (R. de Simone)**

“Jesce sole” was one of the first Neapolitan songs that I learned to sing and as far as I know, it’s the oldest text in the city’s tradition. According to Ettore de Mura’s *Enciclopedia della Canzone Napoletana* it was sung by the women of the Vomero as they did their washing, but as a spoken rhyme it dates back to the 13th century. The song is a kind of esoteric lament or medieval salutation to the sun. We often begin our shows with it and once, at the festival Jazz à Vienne in France, we played it at dawn as the sun came up over the Roman amphitheatre.

#### **02. THE CLOSING OF OUR EYES (P. Faccini - Cello arrangement V. Segal)**

When Vincent and I were discussing what songs to record, we both felt that it would be great to put down some of the things that we had played a long time ago when we first became friends. In this way, the album would not only be a collection of songs but also the soundtrack to our friendship over the years.

I first wrote the piece as an instrumental for the film *Children of the Revolution* for which I had also written “A Half of Me.” Vincent felt that the song could work with lyrics too, so in the weeks running up to the recording, I set about writing the words. Afterwards, I realized that the song had taken seventeen years to write!

#### **03. CAMMINA CAMMINA (G. Daniele)**

Marrying into a Neapolitan family allowed me to plunge headlong into the rich dark waters of the city’s culture. Between lessons in Napoletano, I would listen to as much music from Napoli as I could. Although I initially had a preference for the traditional music or *musica popolare* from the city, I would follow any recommendations my friends would give me. Lavinia’s brother, the singer-songwriter Claudio Domestico introduced me to the great Neapolitan singer Pino Daniele.

The song “Cammina cammina” is from his first album and masterpiece *Terra mia*. The song is about a lonely old man walking in the moonlight by the port in Naples. It’s a beautifully sad and nostalgic song and like many of the classics from the Neapolitan canon, blends perfect doses of bittersweet flavors.

#### **04. CRADLE TO THE GRAVE (P. Faccini - V. Segal)**

In the dressing room before going on stage for a show together a few months ago, Vincent played me a New Orleans inspired riff that he’d come up with. We agreed that it could make a good song and so a few days before we began recording, I came up with the lyrics. I was

inspired by the music to write something based on the tradition of carnival and the idea of a universal dance that takes us from the cradle all the way to the grave.

Carnival rituals have existed for centuries and so it got me thinking about certain paintings that I love in medieval churches that depict humans of every caste and profession dancing their way to death. The syncopated New Orleans feel is a long way from the European middle ages but the universal theme binds them as one. Like a few other songs on the album, we play it without guitar, letting the sung words sit tight to the pattern plucked by Vincent's cello.

#### **05. QUICKSILVER DAYDREAMS OF MARIA (T. Van Zandt)**

Great friends often have the same taste in music and it's certainly that way for us. I don't think we'd ever talked about Townes Van Zandt but when we were thinking of adding a few covers to a show we were working on a few years ago, it turned out that we had a shared love of his songwriting. When I sing this song, I think of Townes the drunken poet and cowboy aristocrat, riding into desert sunsets to the tune of a southern waltz.

#### **06. VILLANELLA DI CENERENTOLA (R. de Simone)**

I had to have a lot of coaching from my wife to even begin thinking about singing this song and I practiced it intensely before we recorded it. The text originally dates back to the late C16th and was written by the Neapolitan poet Giambattista Basile and was later set to music.

#### **07. A HALF OF ME (P. Faccini - Cello arrangement V. Segal)**

I wrote this song for a soundtrack in 1996. The pieces were all instrumental initially but the director asked me if I could also write a couple of songs for the film too. There was a small budget for the music and I remember feeling proud that I could afford to pay Vincent's travel to London, as well as paying him a small fee. It was the first time a collaboration of ours had been published. I love writing new songs just to see what Vincent will come up with when we play them together for the first time, somehow he always manages to find the perfect accompaniment. Compared to the initial recording that we made for the film in 1996, Vincent plays a little differently, particularly in the instrumental passages but it's essentially the same cello arrangement that he came up with all those years ago. Nearly twenty years later, it's good to know some things don't need to be changed.

#### **08. MANGÉ POU LE COEUR (A. Peters)**

After a brief spell in Paris studying painting at the Beaux Arts, I went back to live in London and stayed there until 2003 when I moved to France with my wife Lavinia. Between 1990 and 2003, I would pass through Paris a couple of times a year and I would always try and hook up with Vincent so that we could catch up, try out new songs and listen to records. I never failed to walk away from those visits to Vincent's studio in the Marais without new musical treasures to delve into. In those days, I was spending most of my time working away as a painter whilst playing the occasional gig with the band Charley Marlowe in London where I lived.

I'd been searching for years in my own music and songwriting to marry African rhythms with a European folk craft of songwriting so when Vincent played me Alain Peters' music for the first time, I was spellbound from the very first note. With his songs sung in Creole, Alain Peters unlocked many doors for me, helping me to assimilate and find a way to combine the many different influences I had in my own songwriting. Much like the music of the group Codona of which Vincent and I were both profoundly influenced by, the songs of Alain Peters are also quintessentially modern in the way tradition and innovation merge at the service of a

completely personal form of writing. Although the songs of Alain Peters have roots in the Maloya traditions of his island La Réunion, his songs are so uniquely poetic that they place him in a pantheon of individual songwriting geniuses like Skip James, Nick Drake or Woody Guthrie.

### **09. CICERENELLA (R. de Simone)**

When I play guitar, I use a lot of open tunings, one of my favorites is DADGAD, used by Davey Graham in the 60's and afterwards by the likes of Bert Jansch and Jimmy Page. Fooling around with this tuning one day, I realized that the traditional Neapolitan classic "Cicerenella" worked well with it. It's an unlikely pairing but playing it on my old 1930's National, the distinctive sound of the guitar as well as the DADGAD voicing help to make it more our own. Over the years Vincent and I have added a few Neapolitan songs to our repertoire and this song is one of our favorites. We recorded several takes in the different locations we used when making the album but our favorite was this one, recorded in the beautiful, Romanesque, Prieuré de Cezas in the Cévennes.

### **10. WENN ICH MIR, WAS WÜNSCHEN DÜRFTE (F. Holländer)**

Marlene Dietrich and Friedrich Holländer recorded this song in 1930 even paying for the studio themselves. It was composed by Holländer shortly before leaving Germany.

*If I could make a wish, I'd wish to be happy, but only a little bit as too much happiness would remind me of my misfortune.*

### **11. EVERYDAY AWAY FROM YOU (P. Faccini - V. Segal)**

Although Vincent and I have known each other for twenty-five years, until this year we'd never written a song together. The music that Vincent wrote, inspired me to write a simple love song and to play with the words as if I were writing lyrics to an old jazz standard. There's an old fashioned romanticism in the melody that makes me think of Luiz Bonfá whose music and songs we both love.

### **12. DICITENCELLO VUJE (E. Fusco - R. Falvo)**

I spent a few months in Rome in 2001 and there with the help of my Roman friends, began discovering more about Italian music. I knew some songs by Fabrizio de André, Lucio Dalla, Francesco de Gregori and others from trips to Italy with my family in the seventies but while living in Rome a few months, I realized that I'd always treated it with less reverence than English Folk or Mississippi blues. Being a descendant of Italian immigrants, discovering Murolo's recordings felt like a kind of musical homecoming. The beauty of a song is that with just a guitar and a voice, nothing else is needed. This is certainly the case with Roberto Murolo's interpretations of the Neapolitan classics and if I had to choose my favorite male voice ever recorded, it would be a toss up between Murolo and Sam Cooke. There are so many terrific songs in the Neapolitan songbook but this one is a classic and a joy to sing. Neapolitan songwriting doesn't get more romantic than "Dicitencello vuje," I sang it to my wife Lavinia when we first met, and every time I sing it, I think of her.

### **13. MAKE ME A PALLET ON YOUR FLOOR (traditional)**

I learnt this song from an old Mississippi John Hurt record that I picked up second hand in Portobello market when I was twenty years old. At that time, country blues was pretty much all that I listened to and judging by the state of the record, I must have played it over and over.

Hurt, unlike many other country bluesmen used a standard guitar tuning so it was a little bit easier to learn the songs, if not his extraordinary finger picking technique. This one's an old favorite of ours, it has that joyful and percussive "rag" feeling coming from the picked out bass line in the chords. Between my guitar and Vincent's cello, I think we've found our own little way of enjoying this wonderful song.

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