

# **WATCH WHAT HAPPENS ~ Charito meets Michel Legrand** (2008 DDCJ-1006/CTmusic)

## **FEATURE ARTICLES:**

**The Magazine for Jazz Devotees "Swing Journal", August 2008**

[http://www.charito.com/\\_english/media/08AugSJE.html](http://www.charito.com/_english/media/08AugSJE.html)

**“Watch What Happens ~ Charito meets Michel Legrand” (CT music)**

Written by Nobunari Takai

### **A momentous sit-in performance during her stay in Paris**

The collaboration between Charito, the popular and talented jazz singer, and the French maestro Michel Legrand has reached fruition. Charito’s new album, “Watch What Happens”, recorded in Paris and Rochefort in the south of France is a collection of Michel Legrand songs on which not only Legrand but also other brilliant French jazz musicians perform. The four songs performed with Legrand were recorded in Paris, and the other nine songs were recorded in Rochefort.

This album is a collection of Michel Legrand songs that was recorded in France and includes joint performances with Legrand. The strongest impression left by the album as a whole is of Charito’s superb vocal talent. She is someone who can demonstrate her vocal skills in singing that is relaxed and has a spontaneous feeling. It is quite amazing how she was able to display all her usual talent and not be overawed by collaborating with Legrand and recording in France. Actually no, you could even say that her even greater latent potential was drawn out by these special circumstances. Her excellent improvisations have great spontaneity and represent the epitome of classic jazz vocals. Another interesting thing is that there were several moments when she seemed to be channelling Sarah Vaughan. She may have assimilated the spirit of Sarah, for whom she has undying love and respect. They were only brief flashes but they left me with a broad grin on my face.

Charito’s new album is her third collaboration with major artists, following on from “Non-Stop to Brazil” (2004) where she teamed up with Ivan Lins in Brazil and “Nica’s Dream” (2006) where she teamed up with David Matthews and the Manhattan Jazz Orchestra in New York. These are three momentous albums in Charito’s career and mark her musical and psychological growth as a classic jazz vocalist.

If one looks back over Legrand’s work he has only recorded with singers whose talent he has recognized, such as Sarah Vaughan, Lena Horne and Kiri Te Kanawa. If one considers that, it is a tremendous honor merely to have performed with him. An album like this may well be the icing on the cake of Legrand’s career. As well as the superb quality of Charito’s jazz vocals, this fascinating album brings us a wonderful musical world with a blend of jazz, France and classic Legrand numbers.

## The Magazine for Jazz Devotees "Swing Journal", September 2008

[http://www.charito.com/english/media/08SepSJE\\_1.html](http://www.charito.com/english/media/08SepSJE_1.html)

### Charito Sings Legrand melody with Michel Legrand

Written by Kiyoshi Koyama

The Japan-based diva Charito is now a presence on the global scene. Her recent albums, featuring powerful collaborations with Ivan Lins and the Manhattan Jazz Orchestra, have shown the world just how talented and charming she is. This summer's eagerly-awaited new release is a collection of songs by the great French composer, Michel Legrand. And what is more, Legrand himself plays the piano, scats and even performs duets with her.

After teaming up with Ivan Lins for "Non-Stop to Brazil" (2004) recorded in Brazil, and recording "Nica's Dream" with the Manhattan Jazz Orchestra in New York two years ago, Charito continues to produce powerful performances and this time she has succeeded brilliantly in singing with France's world-famous musical maestro, Michel Legrand! The result is the album entitled "Watch What Happens, Charito meets Michel Legrand" (recorded in Paris and Rochefort, October 2007), selected as a Swing Journal "Gold Disc".

Michel Legrand is a true maestro, a world-famous composer who has won three Academy Awards, for "The Windmills of Your Mind" (the theme song of the movie "The Thomas Crown Affair") and for the scores for "Summer of '42" and "Yentl", as well as five Grammys. 2007 was an even busier year than usual for Legrand as it was the year in which he turned 75, a significant milestone. That Charito was able to meet Legrand during such a busy time was purely due to his sheer fascination with her talent as a singer.

A number of vocalists have collaborated with Michel Legrand in the past. Sarah Vaughan, Lena Horne and Laura Fygi, as well as Kiri Te Kanawa and Jessye Norman from the world of classical music, have recorded albums with him. However, it is extremely rare for Legrand to play the piano on them. Yet for this collaboration with Charito, Legrand plays the piano as part of the jazz combo and even performs three duets with her: "Summer Me, Winter Me", "Pieces of Dreams" and "Quand On S'Aime".

**CD REVIEWS:**

**The Magazine for Jazz Devotees "Swing Journal", September 2008**

[http://www.charito.com/english/media/08SepSJE\\_3.html](http://www.charito.com/english/media/08SepSJE_3.html)

**“Watch What Happens ~ Charito meets Michel Legrand”**

**Selected as a SWING JOURNAL “Gold Disc” (Period 8 Part 10)**

**Written by: Masamichi Okazaki**

Michel Legrand is the quintessential Frenchman, his many masterpieces overflowing with chic elegance and his unique esprit. The vocalist Charito approaches Legrand’s world and what she draws out from these melodies is totally fascinating. Charito sings each song very expressively, cherishing not only the beauty of the melody but also the elegant atmosphere that Legrand’s works evoke. This is a world of “adult vocals”, in the true sense of the words, inspired with the very spirit of Michel Legrand. This Legrand collection really brings home the maturity of Charito, who has been producing solid albums at a pace of one a year.

The cool scat of Track 1 sung over a light bossa rhythm. It seems to be the very symbol of the elegant world of Legrand’s music. Tracks 4, 5 and 6, some of Legrand’s most well-known pieces, truly are Charito’s undisputed forte. With its easy tempo and mellow style, Charito’s interpretation is both elegant and dramatic. The background arrangement that colors her vocals is totally gorgeous. On Track 3, where the strings create a supremely romantic sound, Alain Mayeras on piano gives us a beautiful dreamy solo where he seems to be overcome by their beauty. Legrand’s music demands this kind of pianist. I was also impressed by Alain Brunet’s enticing trumpet solos throughout the album. His careful use of mute and open adds charming tones to Charito's voice.

One more highlight awaits us in the latter half of the album. Tracks 10, 11, 12 and 13 are a succession of Legrand’s greatest hits, and Track 10 has, in addition to Charito’s rich expression, another deeply romantic solo from Mayeras that develops into an eye-opening exchange with Brunet. Track 11 starts to a bass backing as a stylish scat unfolds in this familiar song. Track 12 is sung expressively and dramatically, with only a piano accompaniment, and Brunet’s trumpet in the final track continues to reverberate in the memory.

The maestro himself, Michel Legrand, makes an appearance on four tracks. The pair’s voices draw together, sometimes entwining to produce a world of style and joy, and it is wonderful how Legrand establishes his overwhelming presence as a vocalist. This album will leave you completely intoxicated by Charito’s voice, as well as by Legrand’s wonderful songs. Michel Legrand must also be more than satisfied with how the album has turned out. There have been many great collections of Legrand songs, notably recordings by Sarah Vaughan, Rita Reys and Laura Fygi, but this album not only stands comparison with these works but Charito’s splendid individuality shines through in her handling of the songs. The brilliantly gorgeous finish makes this album stand out still more from the crowd.

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**“Watch What Happens ~ Charito meets Michel Legrand”**  
**Selected as a SWING JOURNAL “Gold Disc” (Period 8 Part 10)**  
**Written by Shinya Takagi**

Michel Legrand wrote his first film music in 1953, when he was only 21 years old. With his natural talent for composition and arrangement, Legrand has written film music for more than 210 movies so far. On November 2 of last year I went to see Michel Legrand’s 75th Birthday Tour in Tokyo International Forum Hall A. It was a wonderful concert in which he was joined by Shuichi “Ponta” Murakami and friends. When I visited his dressing room after the concert I found Michel Legrand and Charito in animated conversation. I thought, “I wonder if we’ll see them perform together in the near future”, and my wish was granted when Charito’s 12th album turned out to be a collaboration with Legrand. And I was amazed to find out that they had already finished recording it three weeks before his Japanese concert.

This vocal album is a masterpiece that well deserves to be a “Gold Disc”. Such a high-level album does not appear overnight. It represents the peak of Charito’s longstanding efforts and creative process.

The magnificence of Charito’s albums over the past few years has been eye-opening. “They Say It’s Wonderful” (2003) with its sessions with such New York elite as Mulgrew Miller and Lewis Nash, “Non-Stop to Brazil” (2004) with Ivan Lins, “Nica’s Dream” (2006) with MJO, and “Now and Always” (2007) with Japanese friends. If people thought it would be hard to follow such a string of great albums, Charito has answered them in style.

Charito’s incomparable vocal talent shines out from the very first track, the album title tune. It is a song from “The Umbrellas of Cherbourg” that runs effectively through the chain of scenes from when the young jeweller falls in love at first sight with the heroine, Catherine Deneuve, until their marriage. Charito sings it in a relaxed and unaffected style. There is a sense of depth, and the heart seems to imperceptibly well up with happiness.

Legrand performs with Charito on Tracks 2, 4 and 8. They also sing duets on Tracks 2, 4 and 8. Track 2 is a Legrand favourite that he performed in his Japanese concert last November. It is the theme song from “Picasso Summer”, a movie which, although it drew much attention for such scenes as Picasso’s paintings becoming animated and moving wildly during the course of the story, was not widely released in Japan or in the U.S., where it was filmed. Legrand fairly pulsates here. His hands fly all over the keyboard. When Charito starts to sing and it soon becomes a duet, Legrand’s vocals are as unrestrained as his piano. He is just like a mischievous child. Charito seems to have stimulated him to really get into it. The remaining nine tracks were recorded in the area where Catherine Deneuve and her sister Françoise Dorléac sang and danced in “The Young Girls of Rochefort”. The pianist Alain Mayeras arranged these songs and conducted the orchestra, creating a romantic and beautiful world of sound. Track 6 was written for the movie “Best Friends” and Charito sings it with beautiful deliberation.

