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INTerviews

DaFnis Prieto
Jazz At Lincoln Center, Nov 3-4

Scott Robinson
Jazz Standard, October 31

Bobby Sanabria
Dizzy’s Clu, Nov 17-19

Maria Schneider
Jazz Standard, November 21-26

Warren Wolf
Dizzy’s Club, Nov 10-12

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His flowing lines on up-tempo cookers are impeccably clean and fiery, bearing the mark of a first-rate improviser, while his chordal work on heartbreaker ballads is the final word in finesse. — Guitar Player magazine.

Ken Peplowski
Ken Peplowski is reunited with his NYC working group that includes Ted Rosenthal on piano, Martin Wind on bass and Matt Wilson on drums.

Stranahan / Zaleski / Rosato
Limitless shows that the partnership is working quite well and in all likelihood hadn’t even hit its ceiling yet.
— S. Victor Aaron, Something Else Reviews
Jazz Inside: Could you provide a glimpse into how you discovered your passion for jazz and the people and or opportunities that opened the door for your immersion and development in the music.

Elio Villafranca: I discovered my passion for jazz when I first went to the International Jazz Festival in Havana, Jazz Plaza, and experienced my very first jazz performance with Richie Cole’s quartet. At the time I didn’t know what blues was, but his performance impacted me so much, that from there on I knew that I wanted to become a jazz musician. I was 16 years old. After that experience, some of the Cuban musicians who traveled a lot to the exterior would provide me with jazz recordings and charts so I could listen, learn, and study. In the U.S. I received jazz piano lessons in Philadelphia from pianists Ed Simon, Farid Baron, and Tom Lawton. Also in Philly I became involved in the free jazz scene with Bobby Zankel and Charles Gayle. Gradually, I began to get other opportunities to play with people I admired like Sonny Fortune, Jon Faddis, Johnny Pacheco, and Ralph Peterson. A good friend of mine, Ron Berg, put his faith in my music and supported me in producing my first two albums, *Incantations/Encantaciones* and *The Source In Between*. I had the opportunity to tour Europe and Canada with Pat Martino’s band and soon after I moved to New York City where I continued my immersion in jazz. My development as a jazz musician is an ongoing process as I play with and learn from other musicians. These have included Wynton Marsalis, Billy Harper, Billy Hart, Victor Lewis, Vincent Herring, Lewis Nash, JD Allen and others. Music producer Todd Barkan and Roland Chassagne opened the doors of the beautiful Dizzy’s Club Coca Cola to my music, and my most recent recordings have been financially supported by Jim Luce, and Robin Wyatt. One of my greatest opportunities came in November (Continued on page 6)
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Elio Villafranca

(Continued from page 4)

2010 when Chick Corea invited me to spend a few hours jamming with him at the Jazz Gallery in New York. Since Chick is one of my biggest influences in music, it was a tremendous honor to play with him and talk music.

"I see composing and improvising as one thing, especially when I’m playing jazz or free improvising. You have to be creative instantly, compose something that is meaningful and perform those ideas while they are just forming in your head; there are no second chances to re-write it or to change it. You have to take what’s there and turn it into art in the moment."

Ji: Could you discuss your recording, Dos Y Mas, on Motema and how the initial germ of an idea evolved into the completed artwork for release?

Ev: The idea of doing this collaboration was first initiated by Arturo Stable. Over the last nine years, Arturo and I have worked on many different projects together, including my previous album The Source In Between. Realizing that we had many similar musical interests, Arturo suggested we develop a body of original works and record a duet album. From the beginning we established that we didn’t want our new project to focus exclusively on Cuban or Afro-Cuban music. We also agreed that we wanted to create something different from what we had each done in our previous projects as bandleaders, something creative, but at the same time friendly and accessible to listeners. The idea became that of fusing various musical elements and genres that we love and that shaped us as musicians, such as jazz, flamenco, Afro Cuban, Middle eastern, Rumba, free jazz, son, and danzón, along with other rhythms we came up with in the session, hoping to create a world music sound. During the year of preparation, the project expanded into a cultural exploration much greater than what we could have anticipated, which led me to suggest the title, Dos Y Mas (Two and More.) Working with Arturo was great. His musicality and ability to play many different hand drum instruments with ease created a wide range of musical possibilities not easily found in other similar duets. Working with him was also effortless because we have similar musical tastes, concepts and aspirations—perhaps because he started his musical career as a pianist and then changed to percussion, while I started as a percussionist and then changed to piano.

Ji: What kinds of challenges and opportunities did you experience in Cuba as you pursued this creative path as a pianist and composer?

Ev: Like many Cubans, I learned about popular music, rock, jazz and rumba in the streets. At that time there was no Real Book in Cuba. We would learn jazz by transcribing what we heard. I came from the small town of Pinar del Rio to Havana and my family was my only means of support. They gave me 45 Cuban pesos per month to survive in the big city. I would use it to buy cassette tapes, which cost fifteen pesos each! Often I would buy 2 cassettes and then go to the homes of other musicians who could travel outside of Cuba—like pianists Ernan Lopez-Nusa, Pucho Lopez, or Chucho Valdés—to see what new music had come out and I would ask them if they could make me copies. Sometimes they did and sometimes they didn’t. But once I had a copy in my possession I would listen to it over and over and transcribe the music. That’s how I learned all of the standards. I remember spending hours at a table at Gonzalez Rubalcaba’s home copying by hand the entire Herbie Hancock solo on “The Eye of the Hurricane,” while he practiced piano at the same time. Jazz was something that was not allowed at my school, so I had to go out side the school to learn it. The one club where I used to play some jazz and experiment with improvisation was The Maxim, the only jazz club in Havana at the time. The first time I played out was with trumpeter and singer Bobby Carcases who would play regularly at that club. Actually, I have a funny story playing with Bobby. In one of my early visits to the club, Bobby and his group played the standard “On Green Dolphin Street.” I fell in love with that tune, so I made the commitment to learn it and play it in my next visit to the club. As I mentioned before, I didn’t have a real book, so I asked many musicians for a copy of that standard. Finally I got a recording, which I transcribed and learned in a hurry. One night I went to the club with the sole idea of playing that tune. Lucky enough, Bobby’s pianist didn’t show up that night, and without my knowledge his bass player introduced me to Bobby as a pianist who could do the job for the night. When Bobby approached me and asked me if I could do the job, I said yes, thinking that I would finally have the opportunity to play “On Green Dolphin Street.” What I didn’t realize was that he was asking me to play the entire gig that night, and not just the only tune I knew from this band. I spent the night luchando in the dark with no charts, and the bassist leaning over my shoulder shouting out chord changes! What was most frustrating of all, they never called “On Green Dolphin Street.”

Ji: With your Conservatory studies in Cuba having been focused on composition and percussion, how have those influences the processes you pursue in composing and improvising?

Ev: The earliest influences on my music career were on the streets of my hometown, San Luis, where I witnessed rehearsals and performances of the Afro Cuban folkloric ensemble of Tambor Yuka. The Tambor Yuka is one of three important variations of Congolese music in Cuba (along with Tambor Palo and Makuata). My studies began at age 11 and continued in varying levels of intensity until I was selected into the Instituto Superior de Arte (I.S.A.) where I developed a serious interest in composition and continued studies in Percussion. My training in composition was totally in classical music. I never took a jazz or a popular music course. Such courses were not offered at the school, but that didn’t stop me from writing my first jazz compositions and founding my first jazz ensemble named Ferjomesis. I see composing and improvising as one thing, especially when I’m playing jazz or free improvising. You have to be creative instantly, compose something that is meaningful and perform those ideas while they are just forming in your head; there are no second chances to re-write it or to change it. You have to take what’s there and turn it into art in the moment. My years of studies in Havana’s music schools were essential in my harmonic

(Continued on page 8)
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and melodic development, while the earlier exposure to Congolese roots in my hometown, gave me a very important rhythmic foundation that is a signature in my style of playing and composing.

JI: Talk about your departure from Cuba and your move to the United States.

EV: I immigrated to the U.S. in 1996 and the reason was music. At the time I was a member of singer songwriter Carlos Varela’s group, I was on the faculty at the Instituto Superior de Arte in Havana, where I was teaching harmony courses to the students as well as Latin jazz courses to American musicians who would travel to Cuba to learn our music. I was offered the opportunity to come to Philadelphia to teach the same courses at the Asociacion de Musicos Latino Americanos in Philadelphia. I love my country, but I needed to explore more about myself and immerse myself in the music I loved and wanted to play, so I took the opportunity. Being deeply interested in jazz, I knew that I needed to come to the United States if I wanted to study jazz seriously. In Cuba I only had the opportunity to play my music once a year, if I was lucky enough to be selected to play at the Jazz Festival. I also wanted to experiment with different styles of music, not just Cuban or American genres. I wanted to explore the world musically and I knew that I wouldn’t be able to do that from Cuba. The economy and politics also played a small roll in my decision, but the main impetus was music.

EV: For me there is always a conflict between the creative side and the business side of things. During my training years in Cuba, I would mostly focus on the creative side, which is very important, but in America I have to learn how to balance those two opposite energies. I learned that art is not just the way artists express themselves, it is also the way we make money to survive in a capitalist society, especially when art is not widely supported by the government. Living in New York has given me the possibility to perform with some of the most talented artists and musicians in the world and made it possible to have my music more widely heard and appreciated. However, with all of these benefits I still find it challenging to combine the artistry and business sides of music, and be as honest with my art as I hope to be.

JI: How has life in the United States benefited your creative pursuits and the business side of the music for you?

EV: Learning about other cultures is the core and most important thing about traveling. Culture, and therefore music, comes from people’s imaginations, and what we can imagine comes from all the threads that are the fabric of our lives. This may sound simple and obvious for many, but I think that as musicians, we often believe that listening to music, transcribing tunes, and playing it are enough to learn about a culture. However, when we add to our knowledge of the music and history of a place, the experience of eating their food, observing their walk, hearing the melody of their language, and where possible living where they live, then we can really say we start to be familiar with their culture, and our understanding of their music is amplified. An example: I had heard recordings of Ecuadorian marimba, so when I got a chance to visit the country, I went to the province of Esmeraldas where there is a strong African cultural tradition. My friends brought along their friend, Lucho, who drove a taxi and ensured that we got to savor local foods and experience how people lived there. He introduced me to a family of musicians who constructed marimbas in a beautiful workshop full of wooden instruments, performed the dances, and carried the legends and oral traditions of Afro Ecuadorian culture from one generation to the next and to the larger community. A spontaneous visit to the workshop with the man who made the instruments where I learned about the construction of the different types of instruments, turned into an afternoon of playing the marimbas with family members dancing around us and long discussions about their music and history. Later, I visited the family’s elderly matriarch who sat in the afternoon breeze and told Afrod Ecuadorian stories, occasionally breaking into song. I went with the man to a class at a local orphanage where he taught the children how to play the rhythms and melodies of marimba music. The children then taught me their dances. The whole experience added many dimensions to my understanding of that particular portion in the Ecuadorian culture.

JI: How have your activities as a music educator at Temple University influenced your artistic pursuits and understanding?

EV: I enjoy teaching. I think it is a big part of my training as a musician. Sharing my experiences with the students and answering questions they may bring to the class helps me as much as it helps them to achieve a higher level of understanding and consciousness about my playing and music in general. I think curiosity is key in music’s development. I have found Temple University to be a fertile terrain where curiosity is fostered among teachers and students.

JI: Talk about what you’ve learned about leadership from one or more of the jazz artists with/for whom you have worked.

EV: I don’t think there is a musician in the business that takes leadership more seriously than Wynton Marsalis and Chick Corea. I learned a lot playing with Marsalis: While we
were waiting to come out to the stage of the Allen room, Jazz at Lincoln Center, he was hanging with the musicians and making sure we all felt comfortable. Then on the stage, he would speak to the audience, making sure they felt comfortable as well. His casual style is at once engaging and warm while his music is so precise and so tight it is almost formal in its execution. I try to follow that model for my own performances. Watching pianist Chick Corea at a sound check during the 2011 Return to Forever Tour was another great experience. His concept of leadership is to free everybody and trust in their contributions to the music. He doesn’t control the interactions, no matter what direction the music takes, Chick is there to support the music as it develops. As bassist John Patitucci described him... “Chick is like your best friend, he is always there no matter what.” I had also learned a great deal about leadership from music producer Jeff Levinson during the recording of Tree of Life by Francisco Mela for Half Note Records. Different from other producers, he would never interfere in the creative process. Instead he would encourage me to expand my ideas without pushing his own, and felt like good leadership, necessary in a studio environment.

Ji: Could you share some words of wisdom you've heard, or understandings or advice you've picked up about music or business or life from one or more of the artists with whom you've worked: Pat Martino, Wynton Marsalis; Jon Faddis; Sonny Fortune or others?

Ev: The advice that most recently impacted

(Continued from page 8)
Elio Villafranca

(Continued from page 9)

me came from my friend and indirect mentor Chick Corea. In November I went to see his last performance of a month at the Blue Note, NYC, with his electric band. Impressed with his performance I told him about my upcoming recording with my Jass Syncopators, and I wished out loud that my project would be as strong as his. He said, “...never compare your work with others at the time of the performance. That will lower your ability to fully express yourself. I have seen your Jass Syncopators project at Dizzy’s with Billy Hart, Sean Jones and the others, and it is very strong. You should always be in the moment and put all your energy and thoughts in that moment. Send me a copy of the recording when you finish!”

JI: Is there anything you’d like to talk about that I haven’t prompted you about?

EV: I recorded the album *Flower by the Dry River* at Soundsmith Corporation, Peekskill, Neq York my group Elio Villafranca & The Jass Syncopators. The idea was to do a rare form of recording known as Direct to Disc to support Direct Grace Fund for Children of the World subject to abuse, starvation and poverty. Everyone involved in this project, musicians, photographers, videographers, executive producers, and sound engineers, got very excited and donated their time and talent to contribute to the cause. One hundred percent of the money generated by the sales of the vinyl edition, as well as a large percent of the money generated by the sales of the CD, will be donated to Direct Grace to support its campaign in helping millions of kids deprived of the basic things in life such as freedom, security, and food. The Jass Syncopators featuring Victor Lewis, drums, Vincent Herring, alto sax, J.D. Allen, tenor sax, Bruce Harris, trumpeter, Gregg August, bass, Juango Gutierrez-barril, Camilo, Molina-barril, and myself, piano, recorded original music I composed, which I dedicate to all children of the world who suffer from horrible conditions. This is a beautiful project that we all can be proud of!

“Sharing my experiences with the students and answering question they may bring to the class helps me as much as it helps them to achieve a higher level of understanding and consciousness about my playing and music in general. I think curiosity is key in music’s development.”

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Frank Wess

Scott Robinson (interview on page 24) commented: “It’s one of the great opportunities of what I do. In baseball, kids grow up idolizing Mickey Mantle for example. If they’re fortunate enough to get to a point where they can actually become a major league player, Mickey Mantle is long gone. But I get to play with “Mickey Mantle.” I grew up listening to Frank Wess – and I reached a point where I can go play at the Vanguard with Frank Wess.”

Photo taken at Newport Jazz Festival, August 14, 2004
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Joey DeFrancesco
Monk Centennial, Dizzy’s Club
Jazz At Lincoln Center, October 12-15

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Sunday, October 1
• Freddy Cole, Jazz Standard, 7:30, 9:30 PM. 116 E. 27th.
• Randy Weston / Billy Harper Duo, Blue Note, 131 W. 3-5th.

Monday, October 2
• Mingus Big Band, Jazz Standard, 7:30, 9:30 PM. 116 E. 27th.
• Vanguard Jazz Orchestra; Village Vanguard, 178 7th Ave S.
• John Colianni’s Jazz Orchestra, Blue Note, 131 W. 3-5th.

Tuesday, October 3
• Rodney Green Trio, Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center
• Steve Cardenas With Adam Kolker, Ben Allison, Matt Wilson, Jazz Standard, 7:30, 9:30 PM. 116 E. 27th.
• Renee Rosnes Quartet, Village Vanguard, 178 7th Ave S.

Wednesday, October 4
• Nicki Parrott Celebrates Blossom Dearie, Dizzy’s, JALC, 60th & Bway
• Steve Cardenas With Adam Kolker, Ben Allison, Matt Wilson, Jazz Standard, 7:30, 9:30 PM. 116 E. 27th.
• Renee Rosnes Quartet, Village Vanguard, 178 7th Ave S.

Thursday, October 5
• Jean Baylor & Marcus Baylor, Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center
• Larry Goldings, Peter Bernstein, Bill Stewart, Jazz Standard, 7:30, 9:30 PM. 116 E. 27th.
• Renee Rosnes Quartet, Chris Potter, Tenor; Renee Rosnes, Piano; Peter Washington, Bass; Lenny White, Drums; Village Vanguard, 178 7th Ave S.

Friday, October 6
• Big Band Sound Of Rufus Reid, Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center
• Larry Goldings, Peter Bernstein, Bill Stewart, Jazz Standard, 7:30, 9:30 PM. 116 E. 27th.
• Renee Rosnes Quartet, Chris Potter, Tenor; Renee Rosnes, Piano; Peter Washington, Bass; Lenny White, Drums; Village Vanguard, 178 7th Ave S.

Saturday, October 7
• Big Band Sound Of Rufus Reid, Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center
• Larry Goldings, Peter Bernstein, Bill Stewart, Jazz Standard, 7:30, 9:30 PM. 116 E. 27th.
• Renee Rosnes Quartet, Chris Potter, Tenor; Renee Rosnes, Piano; Peter Washington, Bass; Lenny White, Drums; Village Vanguard, 178 7th Ave S.

Sunday, October 8
• Big Band Sound Of Rufus Reid, Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center
• Larry Goldings, Peter Bernstein, Bill Stewart, Jazz Standard, 7:30, 9:30 PM. 116 E. 27th.
• Renee Rosnes Quartet, Village Vanguard, 178 7th Ave S.

Monday, October 9
• Vanguard Jazz Orchestra; Village Vanguard, 178 7th Ave S.
• Lee Konitz 90th Birthday Celebration Blue Note, 131 W. 3-5th.
• Monk Centennial, Frank Carlberg Large Ensemble: Monk Dreams, Hallucinations, And Nightmares, Dizzy’s, Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center

Tuesday, October 10
• Monk Centennial, Ts Monk Sextet, Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center
• Joey Alexander Trio With Charnett Moffett, Ulysses Owens, Jr., Jazz Standard, 7:30, 9:30 PM. 116 E. 27th.
• Eddie Palmeri 60th Birthday Celebration, Blue Note, 131 W. 3-5th.

Wednesday, October 11
• Monk Centennial, T.S. Monk Sextet, Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bway
• Kenny Barron, Jazz Standard, 7:30, 9:30 PM. 116 E. 27th.
• The Bad Plus, Bill Frisell, Guitar; Ethan Verson, Piano; Reid Anderson, Bass; Dave King; Drums; Village Vanguard, 178 7th Ave S.
• Eddie Palmeri 60th Birthday Celebration, Blue Note, 131 W. 3-5th.

Thursday, October 12
• Joey Defrancesco Plays Monk, Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center
• John Beasley’s Monkera, Jazz Standard, 7:30, 9:30 PM. 116 E. 27th.
• Bad Plus, Bill Frisell, Village Vanguard, 178 7th Ave S.
• Eddie Palmeri 60th Birthday Celebration, Blue Note, 131 W. 3-5th.

Friday, October 13
• Monk Centennial, Joey Defrancesco Plays Monk, Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center
• John Beasley’s Monkera, Jazz Standard, 7:30, 9:30 PM. 116 E. 27th.
• Eddie Palmeri 60th Birthday Celebration, Blue Note, 131 W. 3-5th.

Saturday, October 14
• Monk Centennial, Joey Defrancesco Plays Monk, Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center
• John Beasley’s Monkera, Jazz Standard, 7:30, 9:30 PM. 116 E. 27th.
• Eddie Palmeri 60th Birthday Celebration, Blue Note, 131 W. 3-5th.

Sunday, October 15
• Monk Centennial, Joey Defrancesco Plays Monk, Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center
• Andrew Cyrille, David Virelles, Ben Street, Jazz Standard, 7:30, 9:30 PM. 116 E. 27th.
• Eddie Palmeri 60th Birthday Celebration, Blue Note, 131 W. 3-5th.

Monday, October 16
• Monday Nights With WBGO - Allison Miller’s Boom Tic Boom, Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center
• Village Jazz Orchestra; Village Vanguard, 178 7th Ave S.

Tuesday, October 17
• Dizzy Centennial - Josh Evans Big Band: To Diz With Love, Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center
• Frank Kimbrough Quartet Plays Monk At Town Hall 1959, Jazz Standard, 7:30, 9:30 PM. 116 E. 27th.
• Chico Freeman Plus+Tet, Village Vanguard, 178 7th Ave S.
• McCoy Tyner, Blue Note, 131 W. 3-5th.

Wednesday, October 18
• Dizzy Centennial, Josh Evans Big Band: To Diz With Love, Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center
• Brian Lynch Quintet, Jazz Standard, 7:30, 9:30 PM. 116 E. 27th.
• Chico Freeman Plus+Tet, Chico Freeman, Saxophone; Anthony

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Thursday, October 19
- Dizzy Centennial, Dizzy At 100 With Jon Faddis, Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center
- Chico Freeman Plus+Tet, Chico Freeman, Saxophone; Anthony Wonsey, Piano; Kenny Davis, Bass; Gust Tsilis, Vibes; Billy Hart, Drums; Terri Lyne Carrington; Village Vanguard, 178 7th Ave S.

Friday, October 20
- Jazz At Lincoln Center Orchestra Songbook, 30th Anniversary Landmark Concert With Wynton Marsalis Performs Favorite Original Works - Composed By Members Of The Orchestra, Rose Theater, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdwy.
- Dizzy Centennial, Dizzy At 100 With Jon Faddis, Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center
- Chico Freeman Plus+Tet, Chico Freeman, Saxophone; Anthony Wonsey, Piano; Kenny Davis, Bass; Gust Tsilis, Vibes; Billy Hart, Drums; Terri Lyne Carrington; Village Vanguard, 178 7th Ave S.

Saturday, October 21
- Jazz At Lincoln Center Orchestra Songbook, 30th Anniversary - Landmark Concert With Wynton Marsalis Performs Favorite Original Works, Composed By Members Of The Orchestra, Rose Theater, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdwy.
- Dizzy Centennial, Dizzy At 100 With Jon Faddis, Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center
- Marcus Strickland’s Twi

Sunday, October 22
- Dizzy Centennial, Dizzy At 100 With Jon Faddis, Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdwy
- Chico Freeman Plus+Tet, Chico Freeman, Saxophone; Anthony Wonsey, Piano; Kenny Davis, Bass; Gust Tsilis, Vibes; Billy Hart, Drums; Terri Lyne Carrington; Village Vanguard, 178 7th Ave S.
- Brand “Taz” Niederauer, Blue Note, 131 W. 3- St.

Monday, October 23
- Greg Reitan Trio, Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdwy
- Vanguard Jazz Orchestra; Village Vanguard, 178 7th Ave S.
- Harold López-Nussa Trio, Ft Gregoire Maret, Pedrito Martinez & More, Blue Note, 131 W. 3- St.

Tuesday, October 24
- Oran Etkin’s Reimagining Benny Goodman, Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdwy
- Terell Stafford, Trumpet; Tim Warfield, Saxophone; Bruce Barth, Piano, Peter Washington, Bass; Billy Williams, Drums; Village Vanguard, 178 7th Ave S.
- Harold López-Nussa Trio, Ft Gregoire Maret, Pedrito Martinez & More, Blue Note, 131 W. 3- St.

Wednesday, October 25
- Oran Etkin: Gathering Light, Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdwy
- Lea Delaria With Special Guest Norm Lewis, Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Terell Stafford, Trumpet; Tim Warfield, Saxophone; Bruce Barth, Piano, Peter Washington, Bass; Billy Williams, Drums; Village Vanguard, 178 7th Ave S.
- Arturo Sandoval, Blue Note, 131 W. 3- St.

Thursday, October 26
- Mike Ledonne Trio Featuring Ron Carter, Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center
- Yosvany Terry, Baptiste Trotignon Quartet, Jazz Standard, 7:30, 9:30 PM. 116 E. 27th.
- Arianna Neuland, Jazz Standard, 7:30, 9:30 PM. 116 E. 27th.
- Terell Stafford, Trumpet; Tim Warfield, Saxophone; Bruce Barth, Piano, Peter Washington, Bass; Billy Williams, Drums; Village Vanguard, 178 7th Ave S.
- Arturo Sandoval, Blue Note, 131 W. 3- St.

Friday, October 27
- Marilyn Maye & Tedd Firth Big Band, Appeal Room, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdwy.
- Georgia Horns, Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdwy.
- Yosvany Terry, Baptiste Trotignon Quartet, Jazz Standard, 7:30, 9:30 PM. 116 E. 27th.
- Birdland Big Band, Lea Delaria With Special Guest Norm Lewis, Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Terell Stafford, Trumpet; Tim Warfield, Saxophone; Bruce Barth, Piano, Peter Washington, Bass; Billy Williams, Drums; Village Vanguard, 178 7th Ave S.
- Arturo Sandoval, Blue Note, 131 W. 3- St.

Saturday, October 28
- Marilyn Maye & Tedd Firth Big Band, Appeal Room, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdwy.
- Georgia Horns, Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdwy
- Vinnie Sperazza, Peter Brendler, Bruce Barth, Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th.
- Yosvany Terry, Baptiste Trotignon Quartet, Jazz Standard, 7:30, 9:30 PM. 116 E. 27th.
- Louis Armstrong Eternity Band, Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
- Terell Stafford, Trumpet; Tim Warfield, Sax; Bruce Barth, Piano; Peter Washington, Bass; Village Vanguard, 178 7th Ave S.

(Continued on page 16)
• Arturo Sandoval, Blue Note, 131 W. 3- St.

Sunday, October 29
• Georgia Hons, Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdw.
• Frank Perowsky Jazz Orchestra, Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra, Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
• Terell Stafford, Trumpet; Tim Warfield, Saxophone; Bruce Barth, Piano; Peter Washington, Bass; Billy Williams, Drums; Village Vanguard, 178 7th Ave S.
• Arturo Sandoval, Blue Note, 131 W. 3-St.

Monday, October 30
• Manhattan School Of Music Jazz Orchestra, Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdw.
• Ari Hoenig Trio, Jonathan Barber Group & After-Hours Jam Session, Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
• Natalie Douglas Celebrating Shirley Bassey, Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
• Vanguard Jazz Orchestra, Village Vanguard, 178 7th Ave S.
• Odean Pope Sax Choir Birthday Celebration Ft. Ravi Coltrane, Blue Note, 131 W. 3-St.

Tuesday, October 31
• Makoto Ozone Trio Featuring James Genus And Jeff “Tain” Watts, Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdw.
• Ann Hampton Callaway “Jazz Goes To The Movies”, Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
• Fred Hersch, Piano; Village Vanguard, 178 7th Ave S.
• Dizzy Gillespie All-Stars, Blue Note, 131 W. 3-St.

Wednesday, November 1
• Dan Nimmer Trio, Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdw.
• Andrew Gould Quartet, Josh Lawrence “Color Theory”, Jovon Alexander, After-Hours Jam Session, Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
• Ann Hampton Callaway “Jazz Goes To The Movies”, Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
• Fred Hersch, Piano; Village Vanguard, 178 7th Ave S.
• Dizzy Gillespie All-Stars, Blue Note, 131 W. 3-St.

Thursday, November 2
• George Coleman Quintet, Jazz Standard, 7:30, 9:30 PM. 116 E. 27th.
• Dan Nimmer Trio, Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Ctr, 60th & Bdw.
• Christopher McBride Quintet, Luca Santanelli Quartet, Davis Whitefield, “After-Hours” Jam Session, Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
• Ann Hampton Callaway, Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
• Fred Hersch, Piano; Village Vanguard, 178 7th Ave S.
• Dizzy Gillespie All-Stars, Blue Note, 131 W. 3-St.

Friday, November 3
• George Coleman Quintet, Jazz Standard, 7:30, 9:30 PM. 116 E. 27th.
• Nuevo Jazz Latino, 30th Anniversary Landmark Concert With Elio Villafañ, Yosvany Terry, Danilo Perez, Pedrito Martinez, Carlos Henriquez, Mike Rodriguez, Appel Room, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdw.
• Elaila Elias: From Bill Evans To Brazil, Pianist, Vocalist, And Grammy Award Winner, Elaila Elias Performs The Music Of Bill Evans, Brazilian Classics And Originals, Rose Theater, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdw.
• Vinicius Cantuaria, Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Ctr, 60- & Bdw.
• Mark Gross Quintet, George Colligan Quintet, Corey Wallace “After-Hours”, Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
• Ann Hampton Callaway, Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
• Fred Hersch, Piano; John Hebert, Bass; Eric McPherson, Drums; Village Vanguard, 178 7th Ave S.
• Dizzy Gillespie All-Stars, Blue Note, 131 W. 3-St.

Saturday, November 4
• George Coleman Quintet, Jazz Standard, 7:30, 9:30 PM. 116 E. 27th.
• Nuevo Jazz Latino, 30th Anniversary Landmark Concert With Elio Villafañ, Yosvany Terry, Danilo Perez, Pedrito Martinez, Carlos Henriquez, Mike Rodriguez, Appel Room, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdw.
• Elaila Elias: From Bill Evans To Brazil, Pianist, Vocalist, And Grammy Award Winner, Elaila Elias Performs The Music Of Bill Evans, Brazilian Classics And Originals, Rose Theater, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdw.
• Vinicius Cantuaria Quintet, Dizzy’s Club, Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
• Small’s Showcase: Mike Bond Trio, Mark Gross Quintet, George Colligan Quintet, Brooklyn Circle, Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
• Ann Hampton Callaway “Jazz Goes To The Movies”, Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
• Fred Hersch, Piano; John Hebert, Bass; Eric McPherson, Drums; Village Vanguard, 178 7th Ave S.
• Dizzy Gillespie All-Stars, Blue Note, 131 W. 3-St.

Sunday, November 5
• George Coleman Quintet, Jazz Standard, 7:30, 9:30 PM. 116 E. 27th.
• Vocal Masterclass With Marion Cowings, Ak Murakami Trio Feat. Sadao Perry
• behn Gillese Quartet, Richie Vitale Quintet, Hillel Salem, After-Hours Jam Session, Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
• John Colianni Jazz Orchestra, Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
• Fred Hersch, Piano; John Hebert, Bass; Eric McPherson, Drums; Village Vanguard, 178 7th Ave S.
• Dizzy Gillespie All-Stars, Blue Note, 131 W. 3-St.

Monday, November 6
• Triangular: Ralph Peterson Trio Featuring The Curtis Brothers, Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center
• Theo Hill Trio, Jonathan Michel Group & After-Hours Jam Session, Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
• Vanguard Jazz Orchestra, Village Vanguard, 178 7th Ave S.

Tuesday, November 7
• Triangular: Ralph Peterson Trio Featuring The Curtis Brothers, Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdw.
• Frank Lacy Group, Abraham Burton Quartet & After-Hours Jam Session, Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
• Djangofest NY Festival All Stars, Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
• Ravi Coltrane, Saxophone Adam Rogers, Guitar Dezron Douglas, Bass E.J. Strickland, Drums; Village Vanguard, 178 7th Ave S.
• Rebirth Brass Band, Residency, Blue Note, 131 W. 3-St.

Wednesday, November 8
• Israeli Jazz Celebration: 7:30pm—Guy Mintus Trio; 9:30pm—Yotam Ben-Or Quartet, Dizzy’s Club. Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdw.
• Michael Zierer Quartet, Ryan Keberle & Catharsis, Aaron Seeger, After-Hours Jam Session, Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
• Djangofest NY Festival All Stars; David Ostwalds Louis Armstrong Eternity Band; Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
• Ravi Coltrane, Saxophone Adam Rogers, Guitar Dezron Douglas, Bass E.J. Strickland, Drums; Village Vanguard, 178 7th Ave S.
• Rebirth Brass Band, Residency, Blue Note, 131 W. 3-St.

Thursday, November 9
• Leonard Bernstein At The Jazz At Lincoln Center Orchestra With Wynton Marsalis Celebrates The Leonard Bernstein Centennial, Rose Theater, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdw.
• Sullivan Fortner, Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdw.
• New York Jazz Nine, Nick Hampton Trio, Jonathan Thomas, After-Hours Jam Session, Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
• Djangofest NY Festival All Stars, Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
• Ravi Coltrane, Saxophone Adam Rogers, Guitar Dezron Douglas, Bass E.J. Strickland, Drums; Village Vanguard, 178 7th Ave S.
• Talib Kweli – Live band residency “Quality” album 15- Anniversary, Blue Note, 131 W. 3-St.

Friday, November 10
• Leonard Bernstein At The Jazz At Lincoln Center Orchestra With Wynton Marsalis Celebrates The Leonard Bernstein Centennial, Rose Theater, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdw.
• Warren Wolf, Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdw.
• Tim Foley Quartet, The Flail, After-Hours Jam Session With Joe Farnsworth, Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
• Djangofest NY Festival All Stars, Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
• Ravi Coltrane, Saxophone Adam Rogers, Guitar Dezron Douglas, Bass E.J. Strickland, Drums; Village Vanguard, 178 7th Ave S.
• Talib Kweli, Blue Note, 131 W. 3-St.

Saturday, November 11
• Leonard Bernstein At The Jazz At Lincoln Center Orchestra With Wynton Marsalis Celebrates The Leonard Bernstein Centennial, Rose Theater, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdw.
• Warren Wolf, Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdw.
• Jon Roche, The Flail, Philip Harper Quintet, Small’s, 183 W. 10th St.
• Djangofest NY Festival All Stars, Birdland, 315 W. 44th St.
• Bad Plus, Bill Frisell, Village Vanguard, 178 7th Ave S.
• Ravi Coltrane, Saxophone Adam Rogers, Guitar Dezron Douglas, Bass E.J. Strickland, Drums; Village Vanguard, 178 7th Ave S.

(Continued on page 17)
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“Some people’s idea of free speech is that they are free to say what they like, but if anyone says anything back that is an outrage.”

- Winston Churchill

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“...among human beings jealousy ranks distinctly as a weakness; a trademark of small minds; a property of all small minds, yet a property which even the smallest is ashamed of; and when accused of its possession willingly deny it and resent the accusation as an insult.”

- Mark Twain

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**Sunday, November 19**

- **Bobby Sanabria Multimedia Big Band**: West Side Story At 60 Reimagined, Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdwy.
- **Brian Blade, Jazz Standard**: 7:30, 9:30 PM. 116 E. 27th.
- **Al Murakami, Tardo Hammer, Small’s**: 183 W. 10th St.
- **Veronica Swift, Birdland**: 315 W. 44th St.
- **John Zorn’s Masada**: Book Three, Masada At The Vanguard, Village Vanguard, 178 7th Ave S.
- **Stanley Clarke Band with Lenny White, Blue Note**: 131 W. 3rd St.

**Monday, November 20**

- **Steve Nelson Salutes Bobby Hutcherson, Dizzy’s Club**, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdwy.
- **Ali Hoenig Trio, Jonathan Barber, Small’s**: 183 W. 10th St.
- **Veronica Swift, Birdland**: 315 W. 44th St.
- **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra, Village Vanguard**: 178 7th Ave S.
- **Marcus Strickland’s Twi-Life & Friends, Blue Note**: 131 W. 3rd St.

**Tuesday, November 21**

- **Yotam Silberstein, Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdwy.**
- **Maria Schneider Orch, Jazz Standard**: 7:30, 9:30 PM. 116 E. 27th.
- **Steve Nelson Quintet, Abraham Burton Quartet & After-Hours Jam Session, Small’s**: 183 W. 10th St.
- **Veronica Swift, Birdland**: 315 W. 44th St.
- **Jason Moran, Village Vanguard**: 178 7th Ave S.
- **Dee Dee Bridgewater, Blue Note**: 131 W. 3rd St.

**Wednesday, November 22**

- **Wyckoff Gordon, Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Ct, 60th & Bdwy.**
- **Maria Schneider Orch, Jazz Standard**: 7:30, 9:30 PM. 116 E. 27th.
- **Taylor Eigsti, Asaf Yuria, Small’s**: 183 W. 10th St.
- **Louis Armstrong Eternity, Veronica Swift, Birdland**: 315 W. 44th St.
- **Jason Moran, Village Vanguard**: 178 7th Ave S.
- **Dee Dee Bridgewater, Blue Note**: 131 W. 3rd St.

**Thursday, November 23**

- **Wyckoff Gordon, Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Ct, 60th & Bdwy.**
- **Taylor Eigsti, Small’s**: 183 W. 10th St.
- **Veronica Swift, Birdland**: 315 W. 44th St.
- **Jason Moran, Piano, Village Vanguard**: 178 7th Ave S.
- **Dee Dee Bridgewater, Blue Note**: 131 W. 3rd St.

**Friday, November 24**

- **Wyckoff Gordon, Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Ct, 60th & Bdwy.**
- **Maria Schneider Orch, Jazz Standard**: 7:30, 9:30 PM. 116 E. 27th.
- **Brandon Lee Quartet, Jerome Jennings Sextet, After-Hours Jam Session With Corey Wallace, Small’s**: 183 W. 10th St.
- **Veronica Swift With The Benny Green Trio, Birdland**: 315 W. 44th St.
- **Jason Moran, Piano, Village Vanguard**: 178 7th Ave S.
- **Dee Dee Bridgewater, Blue Note**: 131 W. 3rd St.

**Saturday, November 25**

- **Wyckoff Gordon, Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Ct, 60th & Bdwy.**
- **Maria Schneider Orch, Jazz Standard**: 7:30, 9:30 PM. 116 E. 27th.
- **Michael Stephens, Philip Harper Quintet, Small’s**: 183 W. 10th St.
- **Veronica Swift, Benny Green, Birdland Big Band**: 315 W. 44th St.
- **Jason Moran, Village Vanguard**: 178 7th Ave S.
- **Dee Dee Bridgewater, Blue Note**: 131 W. 3rd St.

**Sunday, November 26**

- **Wyckoff Gordon, Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Ct, 60th & Bdwy.**
- **Maria Schneider Orch, Jazz Standard**: 7:30, 9:30 PM. 116 E. 27th.
- **Marion Cowings, Al Murakami, David Gibson, Small’s**: 183 W. 10th St.
- **Jason Moran, Village Vanguard**: 178 7th Ave S.
- **Dee Dee Bridgewater, Blue Note**: 131 W. 3rd St.

**Monday, November 27**

- **MSM Afro-Cuban Jazz Orchestra, Dizzy’s Club, Jazz At Lincoln Center, 60th & Bdwy.**
- **Strahan/Zeleski/Rosato, Jonathan Michel, Small’s**
- **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra, Village Vanguard**: 178 7th Ave S.
- **McCoy Tyner, Blue Note**: 131 W. 3rd St.
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ADDITIONAL JAZZ RESOURCES

Big Apple Jazz, bigapplejazz.com, 718-606-8442, gordon@bigapplejazz.com

Louis Armstrong House, 34-56 107th St, Corona, NY 11368, 718-997-3760, corama.net

Institute of Jazz Studies, John Cotton Dana Library, Rutgers-Univ., 185 University Avenue, Newark, NJ 07102, 973-353-5595

Jazzmobi, Inc., jazzmobile.org

Jazz Museum in Harlem, 150 E. 126th St., 212-348-8300, jazzmuseuminharlem.org

Jazz Foundation of America, 322 W. 48th St, 212-245-3999, jazzfoundation.org

New Jersey Jazz Society, 1-800-363-NJS, njas.org

New York Blues & Jazz Society, NYbluesandJazz.org


**Interview**

**Dafnis Prieto**

**Learning From Everything**

*Interview by Eric Nemeyer, Photo by Ken Weiss*

JI: What kinds of challenges did you experience to your creativity and musical development while you lived in Cuba?

DP: I always like challenges specially in music and I think I have had lots of them around my musical development, in Cuba one of my biggest challenge was to play, learn and create music with the band “Columna B.” We were always looking for some new ideas and the understanding of the music itself.

JI: What prompted you to migrate to the United States, and how did that happen?

DP: I was living in Barcelona, Spain and I wasn’t satisfied with my career there, then I was invited by Jane Bunnett to perform in Canada and the U.S. so I came and I decided that I had to make a step forward with my professional life and make the move to New York, so I did, that was in 1999, I wanted to live in a place where I could meet and play with different kind of musicians, I wanted to develop myself as much as I can, and New York was the place for it.

JI: Could you talk about how elements of Afro-Cuban rhythms or music play a foundational role in your conception and approach to all genres of music?

DP: Well, I was born with the Afro Cuban background in Afro Cuban music provided? I liked the mix she had of AfroCuban traditional music with the Jazz elements.

JI: How did your experiences at the National School of Music in Havana benefit you, or challenge you? How did it provide the groundwork for your career?

DP: At the time that I was at the National School of Music in Havana I was learning from the school all the European classic music from J.S Bach to more contemporary Europe-

JI: What kinds of listening or study of jazz did you experience upon your arrival in the United States?

DP: The life of the musician in America is hard but at least I’m doing what I like to do, the challenge is that sometimes I have to play music that I don’t really like and just because I have to pay my bills, I have to go and make it happen.

JI: In brief, what kinds of impact did each of these musicians make upon your artistry?

DP: That’s a big question because they all have different ways to approach music in the first place, from the conception of the music in their heads to the sound that come as a consequence of it, They are all great but very different....

JI: Could you compare the goals, perspective and or leadership styles of a few of the artists for whom you have worked: Steve Coleman, Jane Bunnett, Henry Threadgill, Michel Camilo, Arturo O’Farrill?

DP: I think they all influenced me and they all challenge me to make myself a better drummer and a better musician.

JI: Tell us about your experience working with Herbie Hancock?

DP: That was a performance I did at the Economic Forum. It was an All Star band with Quincy Jones as a director, I can’t really tell you that much about the experience because it was only a couple of tunes that I played with an music like Stravinsky, so I did my training as a classic percussion such as timpani, xylophone etc. I developed my reading and harmony, I learned about music history in general, I also had the time to practice drums by myself and that’s what I did almost for the whole time. I’m self-thought on drum set. I also had a great teacher for snare drum his name is Roberto Concepcion he was a great inspiration for me.

JI: What kinds of listening or study of jazz drummers and jazz groups did you do to help you gain proficiency to the level that your background in Afro Cuban music provided?

DP: I listened a lot of Elvin Jones mostly with the John Coltrane Quartet, also Tony Williams with Miles and Jack DeJohnette, Buddy Rich, Steve Gadd and many others. I liked to figure things out by myself, I didn’t have that many drum books to learn from, so I learned mostly the drum set by listening.

JI: What kinds of challenges—in terms of music, business, career—did you experience upon your arrival in the United States?

DP: That’s a big question because they all have different ways to approach music in the first place, from the conception of the music in their heads to the sound that come as a consequence of it, They are all great but very different....

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(Continued on page 22)
Dafnis Prieto

(Continued from page 20)

him and I saw Herbie five or then minutes before the gig.

JI: How does your approach or perspective differ when you are in the role of being a sideman as compared to a leader?

DP: I try to play all the music with the same passion as if it were mine, but when I’m playing my music I know what I wrote and what I meant in each piece, so it’s quite easier.

JI: How did your deal with Zoho Records develop?

DP: I met Joachim from Zoho Music when he was starting with a the Label called Khaon. He approached me to make my own Record but I wasn’t ready for it at that time, since then we have been in touch and now I have two records on Zoho Music Label, the first is title About the Monks and the second album is Absolute Quintet.

JI: What kinds of suggestions or direction from producers did you receive in the creation of your various albums?

DP: I produced my first record myself and the second album it was produced by Roberto Occhipinti and myself. In this case the music kept the same with not big change, that is great for me to work with him because I’ve known him for many years and he knew the kind of music I was writing for this new album, good producer also get really specific on how the band should articulate or interpret parts in the music and so on ... this kind of music is more about the sound of the whole album and to make sure that it’s recorded well too I’m talking about live music of course.

JI: Could you talk about how you have developed your compositional skills?

DP: Well, learning from everything. I hear what I want and I what I don’t want as a sound projection in my bands. I study scores and charts from jazz composers and also from European music, African music, Indian music and the music that comes from Cuba. I follow a lot my intuition when I sit at the piano to write music. It feels great when I’m doing it but is a lot of work when you have a lot of music to write...

JI: What processes do you go through to develop those compositions?

DP: Sometime the idea comes from a simple bass line or from a melody or from a rhythm structure, I don’t follow a role in my writing and I liked that way. I walk around with my recorder player and I record those ideas any where — when I’m walking, waiting for the subway etc. That way I make sure that the idea is not going to fly away from me.

JI: What words of wisdom have you received from a teacher or mentor, or is there a quotation or fragment of wisdom that has inspired you or that you abide by?

DP: There are a lot of them that I’ve followed, but I know them in Spanish ... haha …
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I get to play with “Mickey Mantle.”

By Eric Nemeyer

JI: Who and what were your initial inspirations to focus on baritone sax?

SR: Well that’s an interesting question. I actually don’t focus on the baritone sax although a lot of people think I do. I never played much baritone until I came to New York. I started getting some calls from people that needed a baritone sax player. So I started playing it more and then I started getting more calls to play it, and I played it with a lot of big bands. Most of that has come to an end. I’m still playing it with Maria Schneider’s band, and I was playing it with Bob Brookmeyer. I actually really do love the instrument and I think I managed to develop a personal sound and approach to it which helps to get me a lot of attention. The problem is that there’s something about the baritone tone and focusing more on tenor and telling certain people to call me for tenor and call somebody else for baritone.

JI: How has that worked out?

SR: It’s worked out well because now I’m playing tenor all the time. I didn’t really want to do it that way because it’s my nature to add rather than subtract. That’s why my life gets so complicated. I’m always adding things in - and it’s hard for me to say no and take something out. I haven’t taken the baritone out, but I’ve cut way, way back on it. If you look back over my recorded work, I’m on more than 200 CDs at this point. There’s a lot of baritone sax in there. But if you look at just the ones I’ve done under my own name, going all the way back to the beginning in 1984 - there’s very little baritone sax in there. I enjoy the instrument that once you start playing it and you get good at it and you get a reputation for being good at it, nobody wants to know that you do anything else - and the tenor has always been my primary voice. I found myself faced with a situation where people weren’t calling me to play tenor anymore.”

“The problem is that there’s something about the baritone [sax] that once you start playing it and you get good at it and you get a reputation for being good at it, nobody wants to know that you do anything else - and the tenor has always been my primary voice. I found myself faced with a situation where people weren’t calling me to play tenor anymore.”
appears to us to be part of the river is more a reference to the landscape around it because the water is moving. The river itself has already moved on. I love the music, if it’s good creative music. If it’s part of that great continuum, then I love it with all my heart and to be able to play with the masters of this music from different eras is one of the great treasures of my life. It’s one of the great opportunities of what I do. In baseball, kids grow up idolizing Mickey Mantle for example. If they’re fortunate enough to get to a point where they can actually become a major league player, Mickey Mantle is long gone. But I get to play with “Mickey Mantle.” I grew up listening to Frank Wess – and I reached a point where I can go play at the Vanguard with Frank Wess. That is such an incredible thing. I’m so grateful for that. I got to play with Buck Clayton in his band, and record with him. I got to play with Illinois Jacquet.

Ji: What kinds of ideas did you pick up in terms of leadership from some of these artists?

Sr: I’ve worked for some pretty tough people. I’ve worked for some people that are not very nice and I’ve worked for some people who are really great leaders. Maria Schneider is very demanding in a certain way. She really knows what she wants to get out of the music. It’s never sufficient to just play the written notes and snore your way through parts. You’ve got to really bring it to life. She’s really communicative and she’s just a great, great gal. She’s got everyone’s respect — and I’ve worked for plenty of people that are not that way. They know who they are.

Ji: Could you elaborate a bit about how she communicates some of the things that she wants during a rehearsal?

Sr: She’ll gesture with her hands, and she’ll say, “That part needs to rise up. Think of yourself as flying. Think of yourself as flying through the clouds and you’re soaring over everything and you’re a little bit afraid.” She’ll give you ideas like that - emotional things, almost programmatic considerations that inform how the music is supposed to sound … how it’s supposed to be realized. Much of her music tells stories - and the players need to understand the type of story that’s being told so that they can … we’re actors in a way, aren’t we? We’re playing a role. We’re playing a role in some larger drama. So as actors, we need to find the voice and the mannerisms that bring the drama to life. Her music is very dramatic. There’s a lot of story in it - so it places those types of demands on a performer where somebody else’s music might not.

Ji: By comparison, how does that compare to someone like Anthony Braxton for example?

Sr: Working with Anthony Braxton … there’s another great example of somebody that I idolized from boyhood and eventually found myself performing with. He is a real treasure. He’s something very, very special - very powerful work ethic, incredibly productive person, also very demanding in a certain way. Of course, his music is very different from Maria Schneider’s. Much of the music I played with Braxton was highly notated and very, very complex. I did one quintet performance with him where we played standards, actually, interpreted in a very freewheeling manner.

Ji: I remember an album of his from the 1970s on ECM where he played Charlie Parker’s harmonically-developed “Donna Lee.”

Sr: Yeah, right, right. He did a couple of albums like that. One of them was with Hank Jones. I asked Hank about that. I said, “What did you think of that?” He said, “That cat has a very individual sound and approach to music, and I respected that and I really enjoyed the sessions.”

Ji: Over the years I have read attacks on Anthony Braxton by some well known players.

Sr: Yeah, Anthony Braxton gets thrown into the slop bucket termed “free jazz” - which is kind of ludicrous. He’s certainly capable of playing in a free, improvised manner. He does a lot of that but the bulk of his work is compositional. His are highly original compositions. He’s much more interested in that then in just a lot of free, open blowing. When you play in his ensemble, you have a certain amount of freedom to make personal statements. But you must hew to the intent of the music and the arc that’s being described compositionally. That’s what’s important. Braxton is an amazingly hard working person, incredibly prolific. He’s written all this music … and all these operas. A term like free jazz becomes very silly when you’re speaking of someone like Braxton. You asked what I appreciated about Braxton. The strongest comment I could make is that he’s a great example - maybe the greatest living example - of someone who has really created his own world in this music. As much as he loves standards, and he loves Lester Young, and he loves the whole spectrum of the music … but within the genre, he’s beyond it really. He’s managed to create a world all of his own. I keep an Anthony Braxton file, a Sun Ra file, a Mel Lewis file.

Ji: Did he provide you with any particular direction or suggestions that you found particularly noteworthy?

Sr: Well, I know you like motivational kinds of comments. I met him again after I moved to New York. This might have been 1985. My first album came out in 1984. It was an LP. I saw Braxton at Sweet Basil and I brought him a copy of the LP. He was incredibly enthusiastic about it. He looked at it and all the different instruments, and wow. He was really grateful for it and incredibly friendly. He started saying, “You know, we’re in a difficult cycle right now. There are a lot of problems in the world. But the important thing is that people like you and I keep on playing music like our lives depend on it.” He said that very emphatically and with great passion. That stuck in my mind. He’s very enthusiastic about other people’s work. Years later he started talking to me about that record and I realized wow, he really did go and listen to it and pay attention – so that years later he can come back and talk to me about it. It was amazing. He loves music. I don’t know how he finds the time to listen to all the stuff he loves listening to, and write all the stuff that he writes. Another guy that I used to speak with a lot was Sun Ra. I used to see Sun Ra all the time - any chance I got. He was very friendly to me and we would sit and talk for hours sometimes. He was very giving of his time, very encouraging. He gave me his book, signed it for me and everything and wouldn’t take any money for it. He was a really nice guy to me. He was another amazing person who created his own world.
Interview

Bobby Sanabria
“When we’re on the stage we’re also teaching.”

Interview by Eric Nemeyer, Photo by Ken Weiss

JI: What are some of the key understandings and words of wisdom - encouragement and or warnings - you’d like to share or do share with students and peers about career pursuits, creating music, the music business and so forth?

BS: I tell my students that it is imperative that they know what is happening in the other arts - dance, theater, poetry, literature, etc. That they have to know what’s happening in the world - politically, socially, artistically, scientifically. I occasionally ask, “What was the last book you read?” You’d be surprised at the stores. I find that unfortunately we live in an era where we have more access to information, culture, history, science, etc., than ever before, but many times we are the most uninformed artists

“...of interesting stuff that’s happening all around you, particularly musically. You don’t know everything, you haven’t live that long. Respect is one the most supreme forms of love. Listen — your ears are your best teacher. When some tidbit of knowledge is given to you, write it down, record it, whatever needs to be done to retain. Knowledge is power, those tidbits add up. Respect all elders. They’ve lived longer than you, they must’ve done something right. The last piece of advice? Learn how to dance, you’ll swing harder. Particularly mambo on 2. [smile]

JI: Could you talk about the growth and development of the Manhattan School of Music Afro-Cuban Jazz Orchestra (MSM ACJO)?

BS: Justin Dicioccio who is head of the jazz

on planet earth. It didn’t used to be that way. A true artist is totally aware of the world around him. It informs their art constantly, thus keeping them relevant. As a musician, you want to be as versatile as you can possibly be. In other words be able to fit in any musical situation you’re thrown in, not just jazz. Every type of music in the world has improvisation in it, not just jazz. Have ideals, an ethos, a sense of dignity about what you do as an artist, but don’t become an arrogant jazz snob. Because if you do you’re gonna’ miss out on a lot

department at MSM called me up and asked me to actually create and teach this particular band about 16 years ago. I had just finished a year of teaching at my alma mater the Berklee College of Music in the percussion department. I was teaching ten hours on Monday’s, flying up there and flying back that same night. It was very rewarding, and I had great students, but with all my other endeavors I was just burnt out. With the traveling, etc. it would really turn into a 20 hour day. The good thing is that before I decided to relinquish the

position I was asked to produce and conduct a mega-concert at the school’s performance center in honor of Tito Puente using a student big band. I made one stipulation to the administration. I wanted to the band to be made up completely of Latino students at the school. You have to understand, when I was freshman there in 1975 the faculty and student body didn’t even know who musicians like Tito Puente, Eddie Palmieri were. I’m a Nuyorican from the Bronx, in New York, the first one at that had attended the school. There was a Costa Rican, my buddy from high school band, David Carmona a trumpeter who turned me on to the school, three or four Brazilians and one Argentinean. Nobody on the faculty, except for a gentleman who changed my life, Keith Copeland, had the slightest idea of what Latin music, culture really was. They only knew Santana, Milton Nascimento because he had recorded an album with Wayne Shorter and Airo because everyone in the jazz world had him playing Brazilian percussion on their albums to add some type of exotica. When you saw a chart it would say, “Latin” on it. I was shocked, the people I mentioned like Tito and Eddie were some of the many that I grew up listening to and were my heroes. I remember when I told Eddie’s older brother, the virtuoso pianist Charlie Palmieri, he told me - “Listen kid, once you drive up I -95 and get past New Haven Connecticut, people start asking - ‘Tito who?’ “My presence at the school as the first student of Puerto Rican descent was important in that in my own way I began to teach others about the music, culture, etc., simply because of my presence. By the time I had started teaching there years ago, that had completely changed. When J.D. asked me to come to MSM it was the day that I informed Berklee I wouldn’t return. It was just kismet. I don’t even think Justin even knew I was teaching there. But I loved teaching and I’m good at it. Mind you, this is before the paradigm that exists now where everyone is trying to get a teaching gig because performance has diminished. I was always involved in teaching, which is basically sharing ones knowledge and mentoring. When I was a student at Berklee I used to hold listening parties in my dorm room teaching about the music, culture, etc. That all started because fellow students would knock on my dorm room and ask, “Are you the guy with the Latin records?” A friend told me, “If you don’t do it, who is? You’re the most qualified.

JI: How did your CD ¡Qué Viva Harlem! - which is performed by Manhattan School of Music Afro-Cuban Jazz Orchestra (MSM AC-JO) - develop?

BS: For the last several years the school has initiated a series of themes that encompass

(Continued on page 29)
both the jazz and orchestral/classical departments. Each year a theme is decided upon. Several years ago the year was dedicated to cinema and we did a series of concerts with the MSM ACJO dedicated to move themes. Last year was dedicated to Harlem, so my vision was to do a concert first of Harlem Hot houses dedicated to many of the clubs that once existed there and finally a concert in tribute to all the different parts of the cultures that make up Harlem. I wanted to represent the Harlem renaissance of the 20’s, 30’s, 40’s, and of course the great migration of the Puerto Rican community that started in the 1930’s and continued through the 50’s. Most people if you asked them where Afro-Cuban/Latin jazz was born would say Cuba, but it really started where in 1939 the Machito Afro Ballroom on East 110th Street and Fifth Ave – an old Jewish catering hall, The Park Palace would say Cuba, but it really started

(Continued from page 27)

concerts, why don’t we release them – and had.” Since the school already records the school over the years and they being great [laughs]. After doing all these concerts at the school, which holds about 900 people, was packed to capacity, the school had to close the outside doors and turn people away. The performance of the orchestra was superb. The resulting CD, Kenya Revisited Live!!! released in 2008 was nominated for a Latin Grammy in the Latin Jazz category. The subsequent recording Tito Puente Masterworks Live!!! in 2011 was nominated for Latin Grammy in the Latin Jazz category. Mark Ruffin at Sirius Satellite Jazz Radio has said, “The MSM ACJO is a group of professionals masquerading as students.”

**Ji:** How is your work as an educator in general helping to promote, preserve and advance Latin music, Afro-Cuban music and or jazz?

**Bs:** When you’re young you rarely think about the future. I was always blessed with a love of history and science which I inherited from my father. It has given me perspective. My playing, composing and arranging is something that has given me a lot of fulfillment, but I never thought I would get the same feeling from teaching. It’s given me a satisfaction that only someone else who is inspired by teaching can explain. Everywhere I go I see former or current students of mine making an impact on the jazz scene. If you go to any jazz club in New York City on any given night I guarantee you, you will more than likely see hear someone whom I’ve had the privilege of teaching. Most of my colleagues at the New School and MSM, or any of the other great institutions where America’s greatest art form is taught, will tell you the same thing. The great thing is that most of us don’t know it, but when we’re on the stage we’re also teaching. Teaching and reaching. [smile] Milt Hinton said it best, “Those are my children out there playing.”
“Berklee, yes, everything is laid out for you ... But for the most part, my true lessons came from being out Friday and Saturday nights at the club learning from the guys that were better than me and just picking up pointers from them...”

nationally. There definitely are some down times. Surprisingly, this summer we had some off time because Christian was out touring with Chick Corea. And we just released a new record with Christian on Mack Avenue called People Music. So surprisingly I thought we were going to tour that this summer but things like that happen in the music business so we were off this summer. But things again they’ll pick up starting next week, not for Christian but there are other people.

was a jazz drummer in the Boston area back in the day. I honestly used to think the guy was Buddy Rich because they kind of looked like each other. My parents were definitely pushing me on for that.

J: Well that’s a good thing.

WW: And what was the next part of that question?

WW: Oh, yes. My parents are a big part of that. I’ve been playing music since I was three years old. My father is retired now but he was a history teacher for the Baltimore City public school system. He taught U.S. and World History. But on the side he was also a musician, not touring nationally. He just had a local band around town, they do a few gigs. But I’ve grown up watching him practice. So my dad, his name is Warren Wolf senior, he plays drums and vibraphone and piano and all that stuff too. So he started teaching me at the young age of three. So I was practicing five days per week, 90 minutes per day with him. And then on Saturday mornings I would go to the Peabody preparatory and I would take lessons with a guy, with a former member of the Baltimore Symphony, his name is Leo LePage. The great thing about Leo was not only was he a classical musician but he

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WW: Well let me start with Peabody. Peabody, I didn’t go to the conservatory, it was more preparatory. I went there from the ages of five until thirteen. So I really can’t talk about that one so much.

J: Were your parents pushing you to go there or what?

JI: How does that balance work for you? When you’re out on tour and you come back is there kind of a down period? What’s the work like when you get back, the difference in activity?

WW: Well there’s definitely a down period. I’ve been on the road, period, since almost 2004. Not just with Chris, it’s just been with a lot of other people too. But Chris McBride came into play in 2009, like around June, 2009. But when people in this area, I’m speaking mainly of just Baltimore and Washington, DC, when they start seeing that I was gone a lot—especially the best times to work with are Thursday through Sunday. When they start seeing that I’m never here Thursday through Sunday. They tell you what to do, and ear training and harmony, song writing classes and all of that stuff. But for me, depending on what you want to do, if you want to be in the production business, OK, I guess you have to be in the classroom. But for me, I knew I wanted to play. Did any of that stuff necessarily help me? I would say to a certain degree, yes. But for the most part, my true lessons came from being out Friday and Saturday nights at the club learning from the guys that were better than me and just picking up pointers from them, not saying I actually sat down and practiced with them. Because the great thing about me is that I have perfect pitch. So I can hear what they’re doing and just go ahead and play it right back. And I can listen to so many different things, like if the piano player happens to play a minor seven flat five chord straight to a major or change it to a minor the next time, I can hear all of that stuff. So my true lesson again was just on the bandstand like you were saying. School and the academia part, that helped me in certain areas I would say as far as writing music because when I first got to Berklee I wasn’t that great at writing music at all. What else?

J: Do your mother or your father have perfect pitch?

WW: Oh, no. For some reason my father nowadays he’s kind of developed it. I don’t know how he did it. I would say not perfect. He has good relative. It’s to the point where he can sit down and listen to a recording. He still has his band. So now that he’s retired he likes to write out charts. And it takes him a while to do it. I don’t know if that’s just because of him getting up in age or it just takes him a while period. But he definitely has relative pitch. Me, I’m just like dead on, and it’s not just like one note, I can hear up to about five to six notes at one time. And I’m very quick at it.

J: That’s great.

WW: My mom, she’s not a musician but she’s actually teaching herself how to play piano now. She’s retired also.
Warren Wolf

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JI: Yes. Did she teach as well?

WW: No, no, no. She worked at the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company. She was a supervisor there for about 25 to 30 years. So both of my parents retired around the age of 60 or 59, somewhere around there. They just live a life of playing music together [Laughter].

JI: Do you have brothers and sisters who play too?

WW: I have two older sisters. I’m the youngest. My sister in the middle, she used to play violin in her elementary school days. That didn’t last. So right now, she’s just singing a lot around Baltimore/Washington with a few local groups. She’s out there doing like wedding gigs and stuff like that. I have three children. My children, they live in Boston with their mom. My youngest son, his name is Caden, Caden Wolf, I think he might start playing drums at some point. And my daughter, she’s the oldest, she’s a hell of a singer. She’s 13 so I’m curious to see where she’s going to go with it. She’s the oldest, she’s a hell of a singer. She’s a ballet dancer.

JI: What is your schedule like?

WW: It depends. I’ve kind of paid attention to my schedule. It seems like every year there’s always at least one month, I’m not saying one whole month but if you just add up all the days, there’s always about a month, maybe a month and a half where I’m home. The rest of the time, the majority of the time I’m always out. And that doesn’t mean on the road. I just might be out around Baltimore/DC doing some type of work.

JI: What do you do when you’re on the road? Do you do a lot of reading? How do you occupy your time when you’re not playing?

WW: It depends. It depends on where we’re traveling because I know sometimes it will be early flights. We tend to get into the hotel and a lot of the first record that came out was Incredible Jazz Vibes. That record featured myself, Mulgrew, Kendrick Scott on drums and Vicente Archer on bass. And then the second record we did was titled Black Wolf. That record featured again Mulgrew Miller, Jeff “Tain” Watts and Rodney Whitaker on bass. But Mulgrew was definitely like a big help for me just getting me started and getting my name just out there. And he’s been that way for many people. So when he passed that was a big shock for everybody. Yes, just getting those things, getting my career going, he called me to New York for a few gigs. He was always, to me at least, he was the oldest, she’s a hell of a singer.

WW: It’s funny. A lot of the guys that I play with they’ve never given me any quotes I should say. I would say the one quote that I’m always hearing from everyone, it’s just kind of like a universal thing, is just to keep playing, keep playing, keep playing. Some of the people who have been a big significant part of my musical life, I can easily say Christian McBride, Mulgrew Miller, he was one. Mulgrew was one of the first person to actually, well the second person to take me out on the road. The first person was saxophonist Ken Warfield. He’s from New York. So Ken gave me my first call back in 2003. He took my down to St. Louis for 4 nights with his group. And then Mulgrew took me on a tour to Japan with his group Wingspan. He gave me a call like two days after Ken called me. So through Mulgrew I had my first tour of Japan. So while we were in Japan, he introduced me to a guy named Hiro Yamashita, I think that’s his last night. But definitely his name is Hiro. He was a record producer for this company called M and I, like Man and Ice, M and I. And through that deal I did two records for the Japanese company. We recorded the records in New York. So the very soft spoken and he didn’t say a lot of things like well this is what this person said back in the day. You know a lot of jazz guys do that. But he would just always say Warren, just keep playing. The music will take care of you as long as you take care of the music. So he would say things like that to me. He meant a lot to me and that kind of hurt when he passed. He helped me out a lot. Christian, like I said, was definitely another one. He gave me my first world experience. We’ve been everywhere. I’ve been touring with him for five years and through him kind of I would say we got the Mack Avenue deal. I can also include Tia Fuller in that category too. I’ve worked with Tia for a little bit, actually playing drums not vibes. Even though I recorded vibes on her CD, I played drums on her band for a bit. So there are a lot of people. I could keep going down the line forever.

JI: When you were doing your first and second album for Mack Avenue Records, what kind of direction were you getting or suggestions about what they wanted if anything?

WW: Nothing. This is what I tried to model my records after. I tried to model artists on my records after Christian because I like what he did. Like when his first record was getting into it, and then he went to Number Two Express, he had a whole bunch of all stars of jazz on both of those records. What I tried to do with the first record, and I can’t speak for the second record for Mack Adams because I don’t have one yet. I tried to do on the first record what any typical jazz artist should do on their first record is basically to come out and play. Don’t try to get too fancy by showing all of your original compositions and things like that. I wanted to show that I can play and here I am. This is Warren Wolf. I’m a bad cat. I can play my tail off. That was the objective with the first record. The second record, the Wolf Gang that’s coming out tomorrow, is more the type of record—it’s still showing that I can play but it’s just showing who Warren Wolf is as a composer. So Mack Avenue actually never said anything like why don’t you try this or why don’t you try that. It’s kind of like I had the full thing, I could do what I want. I have my own direction. And I pretty much know how to do this because even though this is my second record for Mack Avenue, it’s honestly my sixth record as a leader. So I’ve been down this path before so I think I know what it takes to make a decent record.

JI: You’ve got the ears for it. All you’ve got to do is put two and two together. You have all the experience so it should work out great each time. What did the guys in Japan want from you? Did they have any specifics that they were stipulating up front?

WW: The thing about the Japanese, they are very specific on really hearing standards for the most part. You can do a few of your originals but their main concern, what they like is to hear standards. So I would say for each record, let’s just say if we had 8 to 9 tracks on each record, I would probably do about 6 standards on each record. And I didn’t rearrange anything. I just kind of just played it straight down how it is. That stuff is really powerful in Japan too. Just play the tune how it...
I’ve kind of come to the conclusion that
there is no wrong note when it comes to
improvising, it’s just all a matter of how
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**Maria Schneider**

*Attention To Detail*

By Eric Nemeyer

**JI:** One of my favorite pieces that you wrote is “Lately.” I really like how you developed the thematic material and built it.

**MS:** It’s from the live album *Days Of Wine And Roses*. The band really swings when they play that. That’s one of the cuts on that record that I felt like, “Wow the rhythm section was slamming.”

**JI:** Are you ever struggling with a voicing or twisting your fingers at the piano from time to time?

**MS:** Oh yeah. I’m always trying to figure out little details. And then there’s that other part of it that’s just like, “now I know what I want this to feel like.” I start to hear how I want it to sound—and now how do I get it? How do I get with these instruments? How do I get all these lines to work; and what are these chords. What’s happening at the same time? How do I get it to work with these instruments, while I’m hearing this color. It’s just the technical nuts and bolts.

**JI:** Gil Evans used sit there for hours, just working on one chord and twisting his fingers as well.

**MS:** Yeah me too. I’d see that with Gil too. Locking the door, he would be playing a cluster in his underwear, and he’d be just sitting there twenty minutes hitting that little cluster and then he would turn around and hand it to me and say, “Okay it’s done.” It’s like he had to be sure. I know that. And that attention to detail is what makes his music just ugh—it’s so, it’s like a blotch. Nothing extra. You take such care, never just slopping stuff down on the page.

**JI:** When you do clinics and work with students in educational settings, how do those experiences impact your artistry?

**MS:** I think the aliveness you feel, sometimes the wish of these students, the freshness, remembering what I was like at that age. I tend to talk to them about the things have helped me along the way and things that I think will help them and help them find themselves in their music. I’m telling them exactly the things that are important to me. And me finding my music and me finding my art and, when I’ve got the wrong voices going off in my head, the things that I need to hear. I try to remind them about what it is to be alive and how amazing it is to create music and dive into your feelings and communicate. And how important it is and how essential it is that you maintain being in touch with yourself and your own taste and your own voice. What may be considered the wrong way to do something might be your voice.”

“*I try to remind them about what it is to be alive and how amazing it is to create music and dive into your feelings and communicate. And how important it is and how essential it is that you maintain being in touch with yourself and your own taste and your own voice. What may be considered the wrong way to do something might be your voice.*”

**MS:** It’s a long ways. But, what? It’s not that long if I think about it. When I was a kid, my father used to work in South America and Mexico a great deal in the agriculture business. We lived in a small farm town. He was involved in designing machinery that a lot people who manufactured fibrous materials in Mexico and Peru and different places used. My father would go there and assist with operations and things. So I was kind of exposed to a little bit of Latin American culture as a kid, even though I lived in this very rural town, with like 4,000 people. I was always fascinated by it—fascinated by the people, the music, the exotic-ness of it. To this day I just have such fascination with South America. I think it’s my favorite place to visit. Mostly I’ve been to Brazil. In Peru I was exposed to a new kind of music called lando. Then the other pieces just came out of… Most of my music is very autobiographical. If I was to describe my music, I would say that I’m a story teller. I love to share stories. It’s kind of a way to share a story and all its essence in a much clearer way than maybe words do—or in some kind of direct emotional way. It’s not through description so much, but I think music has so much power that way. All the arts are some special window to soul like that, and that’s what I’m doing in my music: hopefully touching people. And maybe in ways that they intellectually describe but hopefully that they just feel. That’s my wish. After we recorded this record, I was really excited. I even made the bold statement, on my website, which might have been, because you should never follow a path that you consider to resonate with you and love it just because everybody else loves it. What do you love? What do you want to do? Okay: learn it. Everyday put a little attention to who you are and what you are and talk to teachers about it. I feel that sometimes it’s the most valuable thing that I can talk about to them about.

**MS:** Well, the music was written over a period of time. They are all commissions except for one. And, so it wasn’t conceived—actually none of my records have really been conceived—totally as a record. What I do is I take commissions and when I start to see that there might be something that could fit together then maybe I try to fill it out with one piece that might connect it or something. But, generally, I kind of hope that because I’ve written the music in the same period of time that it’s going to have some connecting element to it. I think this music is pretty disparate. It’s like, there’s the thing with the Peruvian influence, then there’s some things that really have much more influence by like the landscape of my home town.

**JI:** Going from Peru to Minnesota is a long way.

**MS:** It’s a long ways. But, what? It’s not that long if I think about it. When I was a kid, my father used to work in South America and Mexico a great deal in the agriculture business. We lived in a small farm town. He was involved in designing machinery that a lot people who manufactured fibrous materials in Mexico and Peru and different places used. My father would go there and assist with operations and things. So I was kind of exposed to a little bit of Latin American culture as a kid, even though I lived in this very rural town, with like 4,000 people. I was always fascinated by it—fascinated by the people, the music, the exotic-ness of it. To this day I just have such fascination with South America. I think it’s my favorite place to visit. Mostly I’ve been to Brazil. In Peru I was exposed to a new kind of music called lando. Then the other pieces just came out of… Most of my music is very autobiographical. If I was to describe my music, I would say that I’m a story teller. I love to share stories. It’s kind of a way to share a story and all its essence in a much clearer way than maybe words do—or in some kind of direct emotional way. It’s not through description so much, but I think music has so much power that way. All the arts are some special window to soul like that, and that’s what I’m doing in my music: hopefully touching people. And maybe in ways that they intellectually describe but hopefully that they just feel. That’s my wish. After we recorded this record, I was really excited. I even made the bold statement, on my website, which might have been, because (Continued on page 35)
I was sharing the whole process. I tend to share my insecurities as well as my securities. Vulnerability is the thing that connects people always. Actually, when I first starting doing the whole ArtistShare thing and I did my first record, I was in the middle of writing this piece “Concert in the Garden,” and I was in a complete crisis. I was writing some journal stuff on the website and I was saying how I was really in a crisis and blah blah blah. My father called me up and said, “Geez, Pinky, nobody’s going to want to buy this record.” He kind of panicked me because, in a way, I felt, “Well it’s true.” Then I said to him, “Yeah, but this is about sharing the process.” And I’ve gone through this thing every single time I’ve ever written a piece. So part of me knows and hopes it comes out the other side. I don’t want to create any illusion that this stuff comes out of me like the baby Mozart.

**JI:** Composing can be a real struggle.

**MS:** It can be. It almost always is.

**JI:** Do you find that there are days that you have great ideas and other days when you are struggling with a little motive that’s in one measure.

**MS:** Oh yeah, and usually struggling with what the big picture is. “Where is this thing going?” …and struggling with the timing issues. For me the most difficult thing in writing music is how long should something happen. How long should this development be, how long should this section going from here to—for instance in the “Bird” piece, there was this section where I really wanted to give the sort of evocative feeling, imagining what it would be like for a little warbler to be migrating amongst other warblers with all the little wings fluttering by the light of the moon and the stars navigating in the night. Thousands of kilometers without stopping - that journey takes weeks. Here I am, writing a 22 minute piece, and this is one little part of it. So how do you create that feeling for the right amount of time for the music? Make it kind of meditative and make it not feel dull. Those kinds of things I really struggled with.

**JI:** Do you sketch out the ideas or a direction, or is it really evolving organically?

**MS:** Not really at this point, because the material that I’m using isn’t something that is really like a chunk of bars or a phrase. It’s more like I’m developing something out of a motif. I mean, here and there there’ll be something that’s a tune like that and sort of works that way. But there are a lot of other sections and things that are very much more like writing classical music. And so it’s trying to come up with this balance. I love tunes. I love the evocativeness of classical music as opposed to, sometimes, jazz. Sometimes it is fun or it’s exciting or it’s beautiful. But is it taking you on this journey? I want to take people on this little trip. All those decisions I’m making are really guided by something very internal in me: my heart and my imagination. Trying to imagine this journey myself and always trying to imagine what it’s like to hear a piece for the first time. Trying to create a feeling of suspense, sometimes beauty, tension, resolution, lushness—but not too much lushness. More and more, I think joy is an element in my music - wanting to do that without pushing it over the top. Like, “Oh I’m so joyful!” It’s trying to get to notes on the paper to speak truthfully about the way I’m feeling and trying to be dedicated enough in every moment to not stop until I get across what I feel like I want to get across. Not giving up. That’s the struggle. I tend not to give up, so the frustration is I’m not satisfied until I’m satisfied. And that point of satisfaction, sometimes I press that bar pretty hard and high for myself, so it’s like, “Ahh, God, am I ever going to get this sounding the way I want?” And if it’s not exactly what I want, I’m just tremendously disappointed. It’s not a little thing. Kind of make a big deal about it, which maybe you’ll understand.

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