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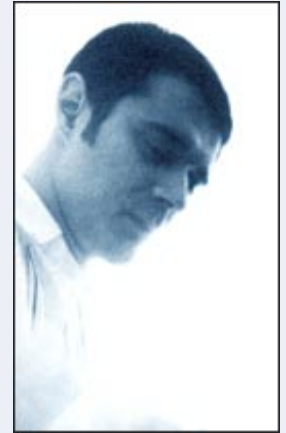
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Conversation with Edu Tancredi

by Thomas Peña

"I am very pleased with this recording (Ongoing Dreams). This is a very good representation of what I wanted to communicate. I had a great opportunity of working together with a brilliant group of musicians who made a great contribution to my music. One of my favorite tracks are "Ongoing Dreams, both Jerry Bergonzi's and Antonio Sanchez's solos..."

Posted on December 2, 2002



You describe your music as, "painting dreams into tangible forms." It is a fascinating concept. Could you elaborate on the process?

On the process of creating music from my dreams, usually I experience dreams with many parts, like a suite. I come up with harmonies, melodic shapes, and rhythms that recreate the atmosphere of the dream. Also the aspect of tension-release (tidelike) is very often present in them. Raising feelings, sometimes inundate the whole moment, (for example a river that is flooding, almost to the point of covering a bridge that goes across it). In order to reflect a tense and confusing atmosphere, many things are going on simultaneously. I would like to use the tune "Ongoing Dreams" as an example. So, in the intro of "Ongoing dreams" I am using an obstinate bass line where the motif oscillates between two different keys, creating a less stable foundation from the harmonic standpoint and therefore creating a more tense atmosphere. On top of this line, there are other things going on, other motifs, and is like a way of building an organized chaos. The next part is a solo piano, where the form is a variation on the blues progression, and where the chords are presented again in two different keys, a half step away from each other. The drums solo is supported by a piano montuno, also moving chromatically, representing this moving tide.

You began your classical studies at the age of six. Do you (or have you ever) felt that you were always destined to be a musician?

When I started to study music at the age of 6 it was actually my mom who illuminated my childhood with her wonderful playing. She was a very dedicated pianist, who practiced every night while I was falling asleep, so when I began to study piano at 6, I was already permeated with the music, and felt very connected with. On the other hand, my father was very much into tango music, and also when I was in my early years, he exposed me to this kind of music. I don't know about feeling aware that I was going to be a musician, I probably felt very comfortable playing the piano, or listening to music.



Edu Tancredi & Bandón 33
ONGOING DREAMS

Who are some of your early influences?

I was probably influenced by everything that I was exposed to. Since the town I come from is very near the Brazilian border, Brazilian music was always present in my early years. Also, the radio played a lot of different styles of Latin music, from Cuban and Puerto Rican music to Venezuelan joropos, Colombian cumbias, Argentinean chacareras, Uruguayan candombe and murga (another Uruguayan rhythm) and also my mom listened to jazz in the radio almost everyday. Classical composers like, Bach, Beethoven, Chopin, Ravel, Debussy, Handell, Liszt were part of my traditional influences. Hermeto Pascoal, Sivuca, Astor Piazzolla, OPA (an Uruguayan candombe-fusion group from the 70's), and an extensive list of jazz musicians including, Art Tatum, Bud Powell, Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Gil Evans, Eric Dolphy, Monk, and Mingus.

In the liner notes for ONGOING DREAMS, you mentioned the influence of the music that blared from the speaker's in your town's public square. What was that like and what kind of an impact did it have on your musical sensibilities?

The story is that one block away from my house, there was this auction place every Saturday afternoon from 2 until 8 pm and they played on their loudspeakers salsa music all the time. So I listened to that for many years. In addition, what it was played on the radio gave me an important amount of exposure to this kind of music. For some reason these memories accompanied me in my formative years and helped me connect with this kind of music a whole lot. The musicians I heard through these loudspeakers, I learned later that were, Ray Barreto, El Gran Combo, Andy Montañez and Charlie Palmieri among others.

Your jazz studies intensified at the Berklee College of Music. At this stage you were classically trained and highly conscious of your Afro-Caribbean roots. How do you incorporate the jazz vocabulary into the mix?
(Note: Edu is currently an assistant professor at the Berklee College of Music).

I studied jazz in Uruguay for 5 years, I was part of a jazz trio and we've got together to play almost everyday. With this trio (Juan San Martín on bass and his brother José San Martín on drums), we were the rhythm section of various groups in Uruguay, so we already were experimenting with elements of the Latin Jazz fusion. When I came to Berklee I had the opportunity to study with great and inspiring musicians and teachers like, Ed Tomassi, Hal Crook, Greg Hopkins, and outside Berklee, Charlie Banacos and Jerry Bergonzi. Being at Berklee you have the chance to study with these great teachers, but also you meet with many students from different parts of the globe, and I was surrounded by many experienced Latino musicians. This experience immensely enriched my knowledge of Jazz and Latin music. So, while I was studying at Berklee, I formed a Latin Jazz Ensemble comprised of 16 members which included voices and was

Fresh Sound Records - World Jazz
Spain-New York, 2002

All compositions by Edu Tancredi, except #6 by Fernando Huergo, #9 by Nestor Toro and #10 by Luis Rodriguez.

1. LA MAMA VIEJA
2. JOPO ROPO ROPO
3. LEVITATING SOUL
4. ONGOING DREAMS
5. MOON OVER 33
6. LOUD PICTURES
7. BASILIO ARAUJO
8. MAZAMORRERA
9. SOFRA
10. MIRAME A LOS OJOS



Eduardo Tancredi: piano - Russ Hill: trumpet, except on track 9 - Miguel Zenón: alto sax, except on 9,10 - Dino Govoni: tenor sax, except on 3,8 - Néstor Toro: bari sax, alto sax on 9 - Jeff Galindo: trombone, except on 9 - Fernando Huergo: bass, except on 2,9,10 - Antonio Sánchez: drums, except on 1,2,9,10 - Omar Ledezma: percussion, except on 1,5,10 - René González: trumpet on 9 - Luis Rodríguez: alto sax on 10 - Gerry Bergonzi: tenor sax on 3,8 - Luis León: trombone on 9 - Alvaro Benavides: bass on 2,9,10 - Pablo Bencid: drums on 2,9,10 - Diego Pineda: drums on 1, percussion on 5 - Reynaldo de Jesús: drums on 10.



called the "Vocalestra", but later on I decided to divide the ensemble into two different ones, "Sonabo" a Latin Vocal Group and my Latin Jazz band "Bandón 33.

With "Sonabo" we've been together for 10 years, initially I was arranging famous Latin songs for the group, but these last 5 years we've been composing all the material we perform. So these two ensembles have been a learning experience where I had the chance to try different types of combinations, like (vocal jazz harmonies with son montuno for example), And jazz started to fit very naturally in almost all of my musical arrangements or compositions, I think jazz and Latin music are close family, (brothers or sisters) and that's why the blend so well.

6 years ago I started to teach at Berklee College of Music in the Piano and Harmony Department, and this has been a continuation of the learning experience I was referring to. I teach private lessons, a couple of piano comping labs, one is exclusively on Latin music while the other one is jazz oriented. Also I teach basic levels of harmony where often I share with the students examples from the Latin jazz language which are very well received.

Explain your fascination with the human voice.

Another thing that marked my musical direction was choral music, I was exposed to choral music from my early years, mom used to sing in a choir. This early experience awakens in me a very close affinity with vocal music. I began singing at the age of 12 in high school choirs. At the age of 17 I started with 3 friends of mine, a male vocal quartet a cappella where I began experimenting with my first vocal arrangements. Then at 19, I started to conduct choirs and founded the Upsala Choir, a group of 20 singers between the ages of 18 and 20. We began singing villancicos from the Spanish renaissance "Cancionero de Upsala". On the following years we performed a wide variety of traditional choral literature and I began writing vocal arrangements of traditional and popular Latin American songs for Upsala based on existing songs, (Brazilian, Venezuelan, Uruguayan, Cuban, etc). With the Upsala Choir, we recorded 2 LPs of Latin vocal arrangements and we toured many times in Latin America and Europe.

Brazilian vocal arrangements sung by Brazilian choirs and vocal groups were my main School. MPB4, Os Cariocas, Quarteto em Cy, Boca Livre and Ceu da Boca were my favorites, especially Ceu da Boca. The possibility of having a groups of singers available almost every day to try different techniques and arrangements brought me even closer to vocal music. Of course I was already a big fan of, Lambert, Hendricks and Roos, Manhattan Transfer, and later on, Take 6. When I came to the states to study at Berklee thanks to a full scholarship that I received, I founded with a group of friends another vocal ensemble, "Sonabo" and I continued to arrange more music for voices during these last 10 years. So when I write for horns, in my mind I hear voices first, I can hear a voicing, a melodic line, and then I would translate it into the horns I am working with. I think the human voice is the finest instrument with an endless palette of possibilities and I feel that my musicality is assisted by all this exposure to vocal music.

You represent a new generation of musicians whose (pan-American) approach is expanding on the jazz tradition (ex: Miguel Zenón, David Sánchez, Osmany Paredes, Felipe Salles, Sebastian Schunke, etc). What is your gut reaction to that statement?

I feel very proud to be considered part of this group of wonderful musicians. I like to experiment with different colors. I like to stretch musical ideas (melody, harmony, and rhythms) as well as musical concepts, in order to obtain other ways of translating my emotions into music. Also I think the music we create is the reflection of how we see life, how we feel life, therefore, our emotions, and our feelings play an important role in the creative process. All these gives a trade mark to how we talk musically, the words we use, the sentences we construct, the statements we put together etc.

How has your music been received in Latin America and Uruguay, in particular?

I haven't had chances to expose my music in Latin America. I have no distribution yet but I am looking into it. I have brought some CD's to Uruguay and people who listened to my music enjoyed to hear the candombe (an afro-Uruguayan rhythm) in a jazz musical frame. The reviews I've got so far are very positive ones, Steve Greenlee from the Boston Globe says "We found the world-jazz album of the year (so far), and it happens to belong to a guy who lives right here in Boston. Tancredi's emotive, invigorating music is influenced by everything from samba to tango to Uruguayan candombe to Afro-Cuban son to Thelonious Monk". Also there are additional reviews on www.cosmik.com and www.jazzdimensions.de

Would you like to make any additional comments on your new recording, ONGOING DREAMS?

I am very pleased with this recording. This is a very good representation of what I wanted to communicate. I had a great opportunity of working together with a brilliant group of musicians who made a great contribution to my music. One of my favorite tracks are "Ongoing Dreams", both Jerry Bergonzi's and Antonio Sanchez's solos, also Mazamorrera and especially the horn's trades section.

What is in your CD player (at home) as we speak?

As we speak, I am listening to the CD "Hecho a mano" by Chano Domínguez (Pianist from Cádiz, Spain) who fuses with magic flamenco and jazz music. This is a great artwork. Here is a list of the CD's I often listen to: Wynton Kelly, especially the "Kelly Blue" CD; Ella Fitzgerald & Louis Armstrong Remember Shakti, with John McLaughlin; Brazilian singer Rosa Passos; Kenny Barron Trio, live at Bradley's; Uruguayan Singer and Composer, Rubén Rada, CD "Pa' los Uruguayos"; Any Fania All Stars CD; Any Zap Mama CD.

Thank You Eduardo for participating in this interview and best of luck with your new recording - ONGOING DREAMS!

Thomas Peña
Co-Editor
Latin Jazz Network

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