



Pablo Ablanedo - Chistreza

Musicians:

Pablo Ablanedo - Piano

Anat Cohen - Clarinet

Jenny Scheinman - Violin

Chris Cheek - Tenor and Soprano Saxophone

Jerome Sabbagh - Tenor and Soprano Saxophone

Diego Urcola - Trumpet

Ben Monder - Guitar

Fernando Huergo - Electric Bass

Franco Pinna - Drums

Daniel Ian Smith - Additional Saxophones on Karmavaleando and Bipolarious

Pablo Ablanedo was a sensitive kid growing up in the 1970's in Buenos Aires. Although his childhood centered around playing fútbol in the streets, he was drawn to music as far back as he can remember. As a young child, he remembers hiding the tears that would come from hearing the classical music that his mom would play around the house. At that time, it was not an option to pursue music, and as a boy he felt his first interest should be fútbol.

"I went countless times to the stadiums with my father, and I remember very vividly the powerful, euphoric, and terrifying feeling of chanting and jumping with thousands of other people at the same time. For me it was a "tribalistic" happening. What is also particularly exceptional and striking about all this was the spontaneous and involuntary, yet still musically notable canonic-like echoes created as a natural result of thousands of people stretching their passion around the stadium."

It wasn't until Pablo was 15 years old that he started studying piano. Pablo soon discovered that teaching came very easily to him and by his early 20's he was teaching piano full time around his neighborhood. It wasn't until the age of 28 that he moved to Cambridge Massachusetts to study music composition at Berklee. There he studied with the legendary educator and composer Herb Pomeroy.

“He was very important to me. He opened up some channels inside of me. For me composition is composition, not ‘Jazz composition.’ I felt at Berklee there were a lot of formulas and boxes to check off. With Herb, even if you don’t use his techniques, you learn about how to think about music.

It was at Berklee that Pablo met the founding members of the ensemble featured on this record. The band got started in 1999 based on a “flood” of music he started writing in his final year at Berklee. Upon graduation, as most of the band moved down to NYC, Pablo had a full studio of students in the Boston area and little prospects for paying the rent in NYC. The rhythm section, (Pablo, Franco and Fernando) would wake up at dawn for the 4 hour drive to New York, rehearse in the afternoon and hit the gig that night and then drive back to Boston in the middle of the night. Pablo remembers a show at The Knitting Factory in 2000. The band rehearsed that day for the gig, but the audience failed to show up. As it became clear that no one was coming, his octet, featuring 7 musicians who would soon be the leading lights of the international jazz scene, without deliberation played the entire set to an empty room. Pablo headed back to Boston that night with his heart full.

I met Pablo when I moved to Cambridge in 2015. He had just published his first pedagogical book, which I started using in my own teaching practice. Pablo sent me some of his recordings from the early 2000’s, and I mused that if we could get those musicians together to record again it could be really special. Frankly, I thought it was a long shot, but in fact I’ve rarely had a session come together so seamlessly. All of these musicians have grueling touring schedules, and some live thousands of miles away, but everyone was immediately committed to recording Pablo’s music again.

Each musician in this band would go on to stellar international careers: Anat Cohen, Jenny Scheinman, Chris Cheek, Jerome Sabbagh, Ben Monder, Fernando Huergo, and Franco Pinna. Avishai Cohen, the trumpeter in the original band could not make the trip from India (though he tried to make it work), but Diego Urcola has been playing Pablo’s music for years as has Daniel Ian Smith. Giants, all of them. But what makes this record truly special to my ears is the deep universality in Pablo’s writing that is brought out so distinctly by the unique personalities in the band. Pablo told me once that the best compliment he can receive is to overhear someone after a concert carelessly singing one of his melodies.

Whether it’s a thunderous stadium or Diego’s whisper quiet muted trumpet—Pablo says he is searching for proof of a resonating, human experience. I do not believe this record could have been made in any other universe than this one. It is a product of its conception, 20 years of perspective, patience and personality waiting to burst forth.

- Elan Mehler