

release

by Sérgio Molina

REVERIES EM SOM by BENJI KAPLAN

Featuring Anne Drummond

Benji Kaplan is a Guitarist/Composer from the United States who specializes in Brazilian Instrumental Music. Like very few, he dominates the language of Choro, respecting it's fundamentals and updating them for the melodic-harmonic conquests of the last few decades.

In his compositions one can note a solid mature background of training and experience playing on the New York City Jazz scene and in his studies at the New School for Jazz and Contemporary music, and through this path his unique look at Brazilian Music. The Echoes of Ernesto Nazareth, Caymmi, Chico Buarque and Jobim appear in his music as reference but never as a rule. His style is clear, personal and like a Nylon string guitarist in the Brazilian idiom, he searches to align himself much more with the finger-style playing schools and

techniques of Baden Powell, Marco Pereira and Paulo Belinatti among others than the path of more commonly used picking styles of Guitarists from the United States.

“...the greatest composer of Brazilian music I have seen from the united states...” - says Guinga (most recognized composer from Brazil post-Jobim) when he first heard him.

Completing 30 years of age in 2015, Benji releases his 2nd album entitled “Reveries em Som” with all original compositions performed on Acoustic Nylon-string guitar in duet with renowned Jazz Flautist, Anne Drummond, (Duduka da Fonseca) (Kenny Barron) a native of Seattle.

The album opens with “Em Todo Lugar” (meaning: Everywhere), a choro-bossa with Chromatic Phrases, Angular Contours and descending melodic shapes, that once exposed - a majority of the time - are immediately repeated, permitting like this, that the fine artisanal creative verve of Kaplan be fluently learned upon hearing only after the first listen through the piece. This play between information and redundancy seems to be carefully observed by Benji, in the workmanship of the entire CD.

In track 2, “Jardim Das Delicias” Benji exhibits yet another example of Contrast with in the same piece in a sonority that remits Baden and Guinga in search of a just combination of intellect and intuitive lyricism, of virtuosity and expressiveness.

In “Remembering Gershwin” the american accent seems to be the initial intention, with cited fragments of other songs, especially Gershwin’s “It ain’t necessarily so” from his opera Porgy and Bess. But what he tries to construct is much more a fusion of the aforementioned musical universe with the ambience of brazilian popular songs of the 30’s 40’s and 50’s including “serestas” (popular serenades of those times in Brazil) as if redesigning a hypothetic partnership of Pixinguinha and Duke Ellington. In Executing this, Benji has the principle melodies delivered by the flute, opening the space for precious respirations, conversations and counter melodies.

Little by little and track by track, Benji Kaplan mounts his mosaic of fabrics of sound that are finely stitched at the seams with colors and hummable melodies followed by unthinkable leaps in search of new landscapes. Although the current language of

Choro is always something present in his swing and while sounding Brazilian incorporates some unexpected results, maybe the rhythmic inheritance of Cuban music descending from his father's side of the family plays a role in his sound as well. On the other hand, his harmonic surprises evoke European composers, coming from his mother's Austrian ancestral roots with the likes of Schubert, Liszt, and Joe Zawinul.

The space of Benji Kaplan's musical poetry makes it evident that even when the rhythmic punctuation is not the focus like in the delicate "Rhapsody in You" ; in these moments it is noted further in the velvety sheen sound of the flute, the cantabile interpretation of Anne Drummond (Who has performed with Wynton Marsalis' Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra). Sharing her last name with the famed Brazilian poet, ("Carlos Andrade") Anne Drummond seems to be able to reveal intuitively; rhymes, metrics and hidden assonances of a Brazil distant in space, but totally immersed in its exclusive essence in the instrumental diction of Benji's music.

Simplicity and expressiveness are the keynote of the proposal be it brief: "Diga a Verdade" (Choro-Lento) or in the mirrors and reflections - between the flute

and guitar as suggested in the track entitled “Lua Nua (Naked Moon)”

It is not, therefore, a jazz album in the sense that there is no sections of improvisations throughout the pieces even though improvisation is taken here as one, among many other strategies used in the process of creation of the arrangements. Once defined the ways and nuances of the dialogue between flute and guitar, the execution takes way like pieces “almost written” exploring the rich frontiers in which art “americana” (whether it be north or south) wants to rework itself in new formulations.

In this disc there is also an exploration more characteristic of other rhythms, like the very humorous “Baião capenga”, “Valsa Vagabundo” and a habanera “andando pela madrugada”

REVERIES EM SOM finishes sweetly with it’s final track with an homage entitled “Salute to Armstrong”.

An album to listen and imagine.