



If the extraordinary composer/guitarist Benji Kaplan had chosen the cinema as his art, he would undoubtedly be called an auteur – a creator whose vision fully encompasses every element of expression toward the ultimate goal. The true auteur fully understands the need for collaborators who have both the talents and the commitment to help bring that vision to realization. Kaplan's newest recording *Chorando Sete Cores* (translated as Cries of the Seven-Colored Tanager) is an ideal example of that artistic process at its most successful state.

Kaplan already has three acclaimed albums – *Meditações no violão*, a solo album of his exceptional guitar stylings; *Reveries em Som*, an album of duets with the remarkable flautist Anne Drummond; and *Uai Sô*, a large-scale masterpiece with varied ensembles that deeply explores the sweeping breadth of his composing and arranging. With *Chorando Sete Cores* he takes another major step in his singular vision, combining a wind quintet with his acoustic nylon-stringed guitar virtuosity.

The prodigious quintet – featuring, Anne Drummond on C & alto flutes, Remy Le Beouf on clarinet & bass clarinet, and David Byrd-Marrow on French horn – performs in full swing on all 13 pieces, but with parts layered one upon another in the recording process. Under the flawless production and arranging talents of Kaplan, the end result is as fully realized as if it were five separate musicians performing together in perfect synergy. It is that unity of purpose that extends to the vision of Kaplan, as well as it speaks to the virtuosity of each player's contribution to the vision.

This is not lead guitar with accompaniment by any means; but rather a fully conceived ensemble in which every member is essential to the narrative content of the story being told. Story, rather than stories is most appropriate, because to further emphasize the cinematic auteur comparison, the music on this album is not a succession of individual pieces, but rather a filmic journey that takes the listener through an aural landscape of conceptual development like an inspired film.

Kaplan explains his inspiration behind the title: “Chorando, being the action word for “Choro” representing the Brazilian style of music and culture (also means “cry”); and Sete-cores, the seven-colored tanager – here the six instruments, combined with the compositions are “crying” seven colors. I additionally feel, that the music has 7 elements: the 6 instruments plus the compositions themselves. So, in essence, the listener has much room for interpretation of symbolic meaning.”

The vehicle of conveyance is a chamber ensemble, as the music is through-composed, yet fully immediate, with a sense of spontaneity that is partially due to the jazz-informed skills of the musicians. But even more so, through the magic of Kaplan's compositional and arranging imagination forged through his powerful foundation in jazz and Brazilian forms. The expansive Brazilian musical landscape is the bloodline of Kaplan's musical vision, and here choros, lullabies, sambas, maracatus and various other forms provide the core of this music – but its substance is all distinctively Benji Kaplan.

The music is often rubato, yet always vividly rhythmic, taking new shapes and forms at each new turn. Every single note is fully integrated into the story narrative – nothing extraneous – all totally essential to both the individual scenes (tracks) and the overall vision. Of course, music like this demands both impeccable musicianship and consummate commitment, both of which are in total evidence at all times. Kaplan's guitar is like the blood pumping through the veins, but the ensemble together is the body.

The stunning compositions and arrangements can certainly be taken as individual creations, just like a great scene in a film, or even as movements in a symphonic work or suite. But the continuity and unified context plays out so beautifully.



The first four pieces touch upon Kaplan's personal journey, (setting the thematic and character development) with references to both his hometown New York and the Brazilian musical traditions. "Bryant Park," built upon ascending/descending patterns and with the ensemble fronted by French horn, is a deftly syncopated, playfully bouncy excursion that highlights a sense of joy and whimsy that is often a part of Kaplan's method. Trekking downtown, "At the Vanguard" embraces its namesake's storied history as New York's venerable jazz club with the clarinet-led ensemble firing up intricately syncopated, alternately unison and free-flung solo lines, full of unexpected twists and turns along the ride.

And down in Brazil..... "Canção de Ninar (Berceuse)" focuses on guitar, with a delicious Baroque spice and its lovely lilting theme, sometimes fluid and sometimes punchy. The excitement of scenes to unfold comes with "Trenzinho para Lapa (Little Train to Lapa)," although with a more traditional Brazilian flavor, it's a tension-filled rollick that chugs

energetically through a wonderland of vivid imagery, sometimes grooving along and at other times tearing around the curves in a joyride of excitement.

(The plot thickens) The next five pieces take the listener, now fully cognizant of the players and the theme, into the rich atmosphere of the total experience. "Familiar Strangers," with rich lyricism and compelling unison passages stoked by guitar, offers a ride through peaks and valleys of aural explosions blended with lines of filigree delicacy. "The Wind" is an episodic journey through varying weather patterns, with the winds swirling around the guitar and continuing to blow after taking it to its destination. Now, only a true New Yorker could call the following breakneck jaunt "A Joyful Stroll" with rapid-fire lines and pat-terns spinning wildly around the guitar.

The title track opens with ascending/descending guitar in constantly varied tempos, ensconced in trills, then echoed by clarinets and flutes in tandem on a bed of horn – all culminating in a phantasmagoria of call-and-response and unison lines, utterly brilliant in both conception and execution. "A Happy Sadness" opens with flute, and as the title implies, is a perfect blend of emotional contrast – poignantly delicate lines interwoven with shimmering joyousness.

(Coming to the climax) Two pieces provide a stirring and captivating plot development. "A Trickster's Bolero" is a tour-de-force of enchanting sonorities, vibrant images, luminous textures and palpable excitement. "Coisa Carioca (A Carioca Thing)" is a splendidly intricate interweaving of ensemble and solo passages bringing the story line and the ensemble identity to a fully unified conclusion.

(The digestif or bon mot) As an effervescent after dinner drink or witty remark, the brief "Samba for Django" is perfect, with its sparkling unison lines in varying instrumental combinations evoking the delightful Django/Grappelli conversations.

(Denouement) To close out this spectacular excursion, "Leaves in the Wind," offers a rich tapestry of colors and textures, allowing the players to conclude in a warm embrace in recognition of a story beautifully and sumptuously told, letting the listener down gently to reflect upon what has just been experienced. **Chorando Sete Cores** is a truly wonderful accomplishment that cements Kaplan as a composer, visionary and auteur in a musical sense.

1. Bryant Park - 3:05
2. At the Vanguard - 3:09
3. Canção de Ninar (Berceuse) - 3:06
4. Trenzinho para Lapa (Little train to Lapa) - 2:41
5. Familiar Strangers - 3:53
6. The Wind - 3:56
7. A Joyful Stroll - 2:31
8. Chorando Sete Cores (Cries of The seven colored Tanager) - 3:32
9. Happy Sadness - 3:25
10. A Tricksters Bolero - 3:57
11. Coisa Carioca (A Carioca thing) - 2:12
12. Samba for Django - 1:44
13. Leaves in the Wind - 3:20

Anne Drummond -Alto and C Flute
 Remy Leboeuf - Clarinet and Bass Clarinet
 David Byrd-Marrow - French Horn
 Benji Kaplan - Nylon String acoustic Guitar, Producer,
 all arrangements and compositions

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 Websites: www.benjikaplan.com
 Available at all fine retailers

Press and Radio Contact:



706.993.2223
kari@karigaffney.com
www.karigaffney.com



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