



PÉREZ PATITUCCI BLADE CHILDREN OF THE LIGHT

Danilo Pérez, John Patitucci and Brian Blade have been three quarters of the extraordinary Wayne Shorter Quartet for more than a decade. Since, they've also continued their individual careers as leaders of their own projects and groups. Now, on *Children of the Light*, they step forward as a trio for the first time with an imagination and fearlessness in their approach that defies the roles and ways of a trio in both obvious and subtle ways.

"When I gave Wayne a copy of the recording I told him: 'this is for you, Doctor. This is our gift. This is our show of love, care and gratitude for all the lessons'," says Pérez. "The compositions on this recording represent the idea of 'going beyond the music.' That's what he has taught us: to not think about music just in musical terms but as a tool for the betterment of society. It's about creating music that brings people together."

Daring and luminous, often an improbable mix of pointed, questioning turns and childlike joy, the music unfolds with mischievous unpredictability. The 11 tracks include original compositions by all three members of the trio and a fresh take on "Dolores," an old Shorter classic. Pérez, who typically plays acoustic piano, plays a Yamaha CP4 Stage electric piano on his West African-rooted piece "Lumen." Patitucci, who plays here acoustic, five and six-string electric bass, contributes three pieces, including "Ballad for a Noble Man," which features cellist Sachi Patitucci. Drummer and percussionist Blade contributes the soulful "Within Everything," perhaps the closest to a standard song in the program. It's a remarkable balancing act but even as they put their considerable talents to the service of the trio, each of the members maintains his distinct personality.

"We can 'comprovised' (spontaneous composition) with dense harmonic and melodic forms, but we can also explore the beauty of a simple harmony," says Pérez. "And you can see the care each one of us put into the songs we brought in."

The pieces themselves don't follow conventional song forms but rather suggest cinematic structures. Narratives do not always unfold linearly. Solos play out more like close-ups in the telling of the story than individual features. "For us, it was like writing the soundtracks of our own lives," offers the pianist. "It was about using music to paint a scene, using the sounds to tell a story."

Children and light are two recurrent themes throughout the recording. The references to kids are not only explicit (such as the voices in Patitucci's "Milky Way") but also suggested by some of the themes, perhaps most evident in the playfulness of the motifs in the title track and "Sunburn and Mosquito" (dedicated to Carolina, one of Pérez's daughters).

"Wayne has taught us the magic of having a simple idea," says Pérez. "Like in his 'Over Shadow Hill Way' (he sings the theme). In a way, I'm using my children as good judges for melodies. If they can sing it, if something sticks with them, I feel I'm on the right track."

As for the idea of light, it is most obviously present in the song titles ("Moonlight on Congo Square," "Lumen," "Looking for Light" and "Light Echo/Dolores" to name a few) but it is also evident in the approach and the choices of open, translucent textures the trio favors.

“Light Echo’ is just an introduction I put together and it’s named after a phenomenon in astronomy,” explains Pérez. The light echo is analogous to an echo of sound. “It is the echo of a burst of light, like at the creation of a star, and it can go on for a long time. For us, it has to do with Wayne’s light echo and our hope of passing it on. We want to explore the galaxies together, but we also want to remain human and explore the earth.”

As for the playing, it doesn’t take long to realize that this is not a conventional piano trio. Pérez, Patitucci and Blade first came together during the recording sessions for the Pérez’s *Motherland* in 2000, and their work with Shorter since has fostered not only their audacity and cohesion as a trio, but also a distinct, shared language.

“As a trio, we have found a way to orchestrate things differently, we overlap in a certain way that makes it feel like there are other instruments in there,” says Pérez. “One of the things I feel is so strong is how we function without Wayne, and yet he is there in spirit. As a group, we have a language we play and his notes are felt even when he’s not playing.”

The pianist further comments, “We didn’t get together just to do a record. We’ve been writing music since we met, and Wayne has encouraged, supported, and guided us along the way.” Pérez elaborates, “John, Brian and I have a long history, and this is not just a record for us but a commitment to continue the Shorter school. We have developed a language we call ‘zero gravity,’ a way of interacting, of orchestrating the music that we want to continue exploring and developing. While we were putting this record together there was no pretension, no grandiose ideas. This was simply three brothers who just wanted to keep the family together.”

The very name of the recording is a play on Shorter’s “Children of the Night,” a piece that first appeared on Art Blakey & The Jazz Messengers’ *Mosaic* in 1961.

Years ago, while they were touring, “It was John who said ‘we should call it ***Children of the Light*** and bring a little light to the world’,” recalls Pérez. “You say ‘thank you’ to a great man like Wayne not by imitating what he does but by playing off the language he created —finding a new language in the process. Like Wayne says: ‘This is the new sound of the trio. You guys are touching another dimension’.”

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