

VINCE MENDOZA

NIGHTS ON EARTH

01. OTOÑO
02. POEM OF THE MOON
03. AO MAR
04. CONCHITA
05. THE STARS YOU SAW
06. ADDIO
07. SHEKERE
08. BEAUTY AND SADNESS
09. THE NIGHT WE MET
10. GRACIAS
11. EVERYTHING IS YOU
12. LUL LUBY

ALL MUSIC COMPOSED,
ARRANGED AND CONDUCTED
BY VINCE MENDOZA

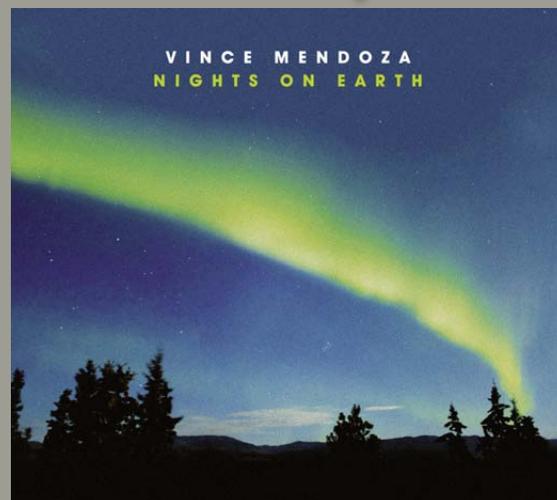
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Vince Mendoza - Nights on Earth

Acclaimed composer-arranger-conductor to release his most personal and compelling project to date.

After a remarkably productive decade which saw him writing stellar orchestral arrangements for recordings by such popular singers as Bjork, Melody Gardot, Sting and Joni Mitchell (he won Grammy Awards for his contributions to her Both Sides Now in 2000 and Travelogue in 2003), Vince Mendoza has shifted focus back to his own compositions for the first time in 13 years. His most personal and compelling project to date, Nights on Earth is yet another crowning achievement in the career of the acclaimed composer-arranger-conductor.

On this eagerly-awaited follow up to Epiphany (which he recorded in 1997 with the London Symphony Orchestra), Mendoza recruited an all-star cast of long time collaborators like guitarists John Abercrombie, John Scofield and Nguyen Le, drummer Peter Erskine, percussionist Luis Conte, organist Larry Goldings, steel drummer Andy Narell, pianists Kenny Werner and Alan Pasqua, saxophonists Bob Mintzer and Joe Lovano. He is also joined by such new friends as Brazilian vocalist Luciana Souza, Malian kora player and singer Tom Diakite, Argentinian bandoneon master Hector del Curto, Algerian drummer Karim Ziad, French saxophonist Stéphane Guillaume and young American jazz stars in bassist Christian McBride, drummer Greg Hutchinson and trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire, a winner of the 2007 The Ionious Monk International Jazz Competition. Along with members of the Metropole Orkest, the ensemble that Mendoza has presided over as chief conductor for the past six years, they bring to life these evocative pieces that flow directly from the composer's heart to his pen.

„I always thought that being a musician is about having a community of artists that inspire you, says Mendoza. I think part of the process of the creation of this recording has to do with the people that I have met and learned from along the way. A lot of what this music is about is celebrating the community of the musicians and the many traditions that they represent.“

While names like Abercrombie, Scofield, Lovano, Werner, Mintzer and Erskine represent the jazzier side of Mendoza's community of artists (they appeared on his 1990 Blue Note album Start Here and his 1991 followup for the label, Instructions Inside), musicians like Souza, del Curto, Diakite and Ziad represent his adventurous explorations into world music (as on 1992's Jazzpana and more recently on 2009's El Viento: The Garcia Lorca Project). „I have an affinity with these players and their music, as they also have with my writing“, says Mendoza. „I wanted to incorporate them into my compositions, to frame their voice in an interesting way. And I thought they would have a connection to my writing style in their improvisations.“

From the flamenco flavored opener „Otoño,“ fueled by the sound of cajon and palmas, to the soothing bossa nova „Ao Mar,“ with lyrics composed by Souza and sung with alluring tones in her native Portuguese, to the African flavored „Shekere,“ featuring stirring vocals and kora playing by Diakite and a killing distortionlaced electric guitar solo by Le, Mendoza cuts a wide stylistic swath through his Nights on Earth. Add the epic sweep of „Poem of the Moon,“ featuring bracing solos from Akinmusire and Abercrombie, along with gentle and evocative numbers like „The Stars You Saw“ and „Beauty and Sadness,“ both featuring heart-wrenching, lyrical solos by Werner and Lovano, the atmospheric and chamber-like „Addio“ for bandoneon and string quintet, and the romantic „The Night We Met,“ featuring a delicate, transcendent piano solo by Pasqua, and you begin to get a fuller portrait of Mendoza the composer.

„Gracias,“ simultaneously evokes the spirit of Santeria in the Obatala groove of Luis Conte's bata, and the church in the swells of Larry Goldings' organ work. Scofield also turns in some highly expressive stringbending in his solo here. Says Mendoza of Scofield's solo, „You know it's John from the first second. from his sound and where he puts the notes, and the freshness with which he approaches my music. Nothing is calculated. It always feels like he's in that moment there...and the moment is always brilliant and soulful.“

Art Of Groove

a division of
MIG-Music GmbH

Hildesheimer Straße 83
30169 Hannover GERMANY

Tel.: 0049 - 511 - 80 69 16 - 16
Fax: 0049 - 511 - 80 69 16 - 29
Cell: 0049 - 177 - 721 84 03
elisabeth.richter@mig-music.de



VINCE MENDOZA

NIGHTS ON EARTH



Throughout the recording Mendoza pays careful attention to color in his choice of orchestration. „Everything Is You,“ is a refined number that opens with classical counterpoint between flutes, harp, piano and cello before yielding to potent solos by Pasqua and Mintzer. The closer, „Lullaby,“ is a stirring duet between cellist Fred Sherry and bandoneon virtuoso Curto. „I think that the music on this record has a lot to do with the loss of my parents, moving on, and of course the value of love,“ says Mendoza in reflecting on Nights on Earth. „Otoño is about my father. He really loved flamenco music and Spanish culture. ‚The Stars You Saw‘ is about telling my mother about my first trip across the ocean when I was a young budding musician starting to travel many years ago. And the use of the bandoneon on ‚Addio‘ has a lot to do with my Italian background. ‚The Night We Met‘ and ‚Everything is You‘ are for my wife and are about romance and the miracle of love. The music for ‚Ao mar‘ and ‚Lullaby‘ was inspired by my son and evoke the heart-connection that we have with our loved ones.“

An inspired, affecting collection of moving and deeply meaningful music, Nights on Earth is Mendoza's most profound and heartfelt offering to date.

VINCE MENDOZA

One of the most versatile and prolific composer-arranger conductors of the last two decades, multi-Grammy Award winner Vince Mendoza has written arrangements for a wide variety of pop and jazz artists, from Joni Mitchell, Sting, Melody Gardot, Elvis Costello and Bjork to Joe Zawinul, John Scofield, Charlie Haden, Al Di Meola, Dave Liebman, Randy Brecker, the Yellowjackets and the GRP All-Stars. His compositions have appeared on recordings by the likes of saxophonist Joe Lovano, guitarist John Abercrombie, drummer Peter Erskine, pianist Joey Calderazzo and singer Kurt Elling. As a leader, Mendoza has released 10 recordings for the Blue Note, ACT, Blue Jackel and Zebra labels, including 1997's Epiphany (with the London Symphony Orchestra) and 2010's Nights on Earth, featuring an all-star cast and members of the Metropole Orkest, which Mendoza has led as chief conductor for the past six years.

Heralded by critics as a master of contemporary idioms, Mendoza has become a primary choice for the world's most sophisticated contemporary musicians. Most recently honored with a Grammy Award for his work on the John Scofield-Metropole Orkest collaboration in 2011. Mendoza also won Grammy's for Joni Mitchell's 2000 Both Sides Now and her 2002 album Travelogue and also 2005's Brecker Bros. collaboration with Germany's WDR Big Band, Some Skunk Funk. He has 6 Grammys and 25 nominations.

Born in 1961 in Norwalk, Connecticut, Mendoza began learning classical guitar and piano from an early age. His musical influences ran from Bach to Aretha Franklin to Henry Mancini. Discovering Miles Davis, Gil Evans, and later, Igor Stravinsky and Alban Berg gave him a further complex perspective of the construction of musical forms and ideas. Taking up the trumpet during high school, he later earned a degree in music composition at Ohio State University. After moving to Los Angeles, he began working in the studios, composing music for television while completing his postgraduate studies in composition and conducting at the University of Southern California. During this time he met a kindred spirit in drummer Peter Erskine, who included him on his 1986 Denon recording, Transition. Mendoza contributed several compositions to that recording and to subsequent Erskine outings such as 1986's Transition, 1988's Motion Poet and 1992's You Never Know.

Mendoza's early solo albums on Blue Note Records - 1990's Start Here and 1991's Instructions Inside, were critical triumphs that featured such artists as John Scofield, Joe Lovano, Ralph Towner, Bob Mintzer, Randy Brecker, Peter Erskine and others. Start Here was named as one of Jazziz magazine's „Top Picks“ and Mendoza was recognized as „Best Composer/Arranger“ by Swing Journal's critics poll in Japan. As guest arranger and conductor of the WDR Big Band, based in Cologne, Germany, Mendoza became widely known in Europe through the ‚90s as a multi-talented composer arranger with a deep understanding of contemporary styles. His work with Arif Mardin on 1992's Jazzpaña with the WDR Big Band brought him a Grammy nomination for Best Instrumental Arrangement. Since then, Gary Burton, Pat Metheny, Michael Brecker, Charlie Haden, Andy Narell, Kurt Elling and John Abercrombie have prominently featured Vince Mendoza's compositions and arrangements on their albums.

Mendoza's work as an arranger can also be heard on many expansive jazz projects from the mid-1980s onwards, including his work with the Yellowjackets, Al DiMeola, Gino Vanelli, Joe Zawinul, Mike Stern, Kyle Eastwood and the GRP All Star Big Band. His television music has also received Emmy Award nominations while his music for the World Cup closing ceremony in was broadcast worldwide. Mendoza has also written commissioned compositions and arrangements for world-renowned classical and jazz groups that include the Turtle Island String Quartet, the Debussy Trio, the L.A. Guitar Quartet, the Metropole Orchestra, the Berlin Philharmonic, and the BBC. His music was featured at the Berlin Jazz Festival and he has performed major works at the Montreux and North Sea Jazz Festivals. He also actively conducts concerts of his music in Europe, Japan, Scandinavia, and the U.K.

Mendoza's 1997 recording Epiphany is a stunning set of compositions for the London Symphony Orchestra and jazz soloists. Effortlessly combining his beautifully crafted orchestral arrangements, strong melodic compositions, extended forms and inspired jazz soloists, this is an album only Mendoza could conceive and execute with such grace. Joined by old friends such as John Abercrombie, Michael Brecker, Peter Erskine, Joe Lovano and Kenny Wheeler, as well as bassist Marc Johnson and pianist John Taylor, Mendoza sets the scene of each piece with the orchestra, allowing these seven great jazz voices to deliver the next layer of emotive harmony and expression. With such a huge palette of both sounds and sonorities the results conjure up strong narratives. Mendoza's skill for casting the hardedged brilliance of Michael Brecker for the harder tempos alongside the soft lyricism of Joe Lovano for the poetic pulse of quieter songs defines his huge talents as a truly modern composer, conductor and arranger.

Mendoza's Blauklang, his 7th as a leader, combines jazz, classical, and modern art to form an ambitious and beautiful work. It features Nguyen Le on Guitar, Peter Erskine, Lars Danielsson and a mixed ensemble of strings and winds. According to All about Jazz Mendoza „daringly expands the vernacular by including elements of abstract impressionism, romanticism and a highly unorthodox palette to position him as the clear and natural successor to the late Gil Evans.“

Mendoza's alliance with the Metropole Orchestra of the Netherlands began in 1995. He was appointed Music Director and chief conductor of the Metropole in 2004 and is frequently seen working with them at concerts, festivals and recordings with the likes of Elvis Costello, Herbie Hancock, Ivan Lins and The Brecker Brothers. His most recent collaborations with the Metropole Orchestra were on John Scofield's 2010 album 54, his Joe Zawinul tribute CD Fast City and on his own latest as a leader, Nights on Earth. On this eagerly-awaited followup to Epiphany, Mendoza recruited an all-star cast of longtime collaborators like guitarists John Abercrombie, John Scofield and Nguyen Le, drummer Peter Erskine, percussionist Luis Conte, organist Larry Goldings, steel drummer Andy Narell, pianists Kenny Werner and Alan Pasqua, saxophonists Bob Mintzer and Joe Lovano. He is also joined by such new friends as Brazilian vocalist Luciana Souza, Malian kora player and singer Tom Diakite, Argentinian bandoneon master Hector del Curto, Algerian drummer Karim Ziad, French saxophonist Stéphane Guillaume and young American jazz stars in bassist Christian McBride, drummer Greg Hutchinson and trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire, a winner of the 2007 Thelonious Monk International Jazz Competition.

„This is a project that has been a long time coming and I wanted to do it in a special way,“ says Mendoza. „I always thought that being a musician is about having a community of artists that inspire you. I think part of the process of the creation of this recording has to do with the people that I have met and learned from along the way. A lot of what this music is about is celebrating the community of the musicians and the many traditions that they represent.“

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Hildesheimer Straße 83
30169 Hannover GERMANY

Tel.: 0049 - 511 - 80 69 16 - 16

Fax: 0049 - 511 - 80 69 16 - 29

Cell: 0049 - 177 - 721 84 03

elisabeth.richter@mig-music.de

