Charlie Haden & Gonzalo Rubalcaba - Tokyo Adagio (2015)

01. En La Orilla Del Mundo (9:04) 02. My Love And I (11:54) 03. When Will The Blues Leave (8:29) 04. Sandino (5:47) 05. Solamente Una Vez (You Belong To My Heart) (9:11) 06. Transparence (7:18) Bass – Charlie Haden Piano – Gonzalo Rubalcaba

The world will never see another man like Charlie Haden. Musicians who claim with a sense of eclecticism and nuance might arrive by the score but no one could possibly play with his sense of restraint or march through time with his sense of social justice and dedication to right. Can you get a sense of one's character by the notes he does or doesn't play? Listening to this 2005 performance from Haden and pianist Gonzalo Rubalcaba, you would honestly think so. His presence is understated, he is almost a ghost, who enters in those shadowy spaces where Rubalcaba's piano figures become a wisp of fog and Haden's lines a bright beacon.

Perhaps those words don't do the experience of hearing these two justice and perhaps nothing could but somehow it seems appropriate that this record should come along a year after Haden's death as it serves as a kind of unexpected requiem and, alternately, a celebration of the man's spirit and generosity. The story goes, of course, that Haden, never one to obey laws he deemed unjust, and that went for adhering to the strictures of genre or expected musical roles. His sense of justice is evident here as allows his duet partner to shine brightly via a gorgeous 12-minute take on "My Love and I", or as Rubalcaba creates the meditative, autumnal framework of the breathtaking opener, "En La Orilla Del Mundo".

Knowing the history of first-rate recordings these two shared—including the classic 2001 release Nocturne—it's not hard to imagine that this Tokyo date would also yield great results. Their conversation on "When Will the Blues Leave" is often funny and just as often groundbreaking as they weave around each other, bounding and leaping through phrases at times while taking long, leisurely strolls at others.

As fun as those playful moments are they are not competition for the more somber elements of the record and those, thankfully, prevail. You can hear the tug of those two emotions, on “Sandino”, which arrives near the midway point of the record, and you can hear the return to home in the spirited reading of “Solamente Un Vez (You Belong to Me)”, which works perfectly alongside the album closer, “Transparence”, a fitting final moment for this pair as the notes of that long-ago evening come to a close. But if it’s the solemn and somber that takes over here it’s not what the listener has to take away.

In the end, we hear the true poetry of playing between these two—and Rubalcaba is never less than stunning here—and the connection between this and the spirit world made through these six compositions.

As it all winds to a close you can’t help but turn the record over one more time in your mind, retrace your steps back to the beginning where the notes and the journey all started. It all makes you thankful that this record happened and that there were once men like Charlie Haden to walk the earth. We will all pale in comparison from here on out but at least we have memories like this from a time when this musical and spiritual giant roamed the earth. ---Jedd Beaudoin, popmatters.com

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