

**Dmitry Baevsky**, favorite alto-playing son of St. Petersburg, Russia, and current denizen of the jazz capital of the world, returns for his sophomore effort on Sharp Nine with big things on his plate, namely the music of some of jazz's greatest composers. He brings to the enterprise an approach to improvisation that is deep and sophisticated and, wait for it... original. He does not run changes willy-nilly. He does not rely on his formidable technique. He approaches these venerable compositions with an eye towards developing ideas suggested by their harmonic structure into coherent solos.

How does one go about choosing these lesser-known gems? Dmitry's method is to look for compositions with strong, unmistakable melodies, interesting harmonic structures, and, because this is an album, a pleasing combination of texture, time and feel. A quick aside: I once asked the criminally overlooked pianist Tardo Hammer why he did not write more

tunes. His answer was pithy and all but unassailable: "the old ones are better." Quality, in short, is the best policy and that's the policy we're dealing with on "The Composers."

There is tremendous variety here. Cedar Walton's latinate *Ojos de Rojo* is a very short sixteen bar form. The challenge, handily met, is to make it sound interesting when one has only 16 bars to work with. Horace Silver's *To Whom It May Concern* represents the other end of the spectrum: it is a long-form composition. It has a strong minor blues feel without actually being a blues. Wayne Shorter's *Mr. Chairman* is unusual, as are many of his compositions — which is perhaps why musicians generally "graduate up" to Shorter's music as they move along in their careers. The challenge and fun of a Shorter tune is to navigate through the tricky changes. As Dmitry says, "often in Wayne's writing the melody is very 'sing-able,' almost diatonic, while the harmony

underneath moves in idiosyncratic directions."

Dmitry uses some idiosyncratic musical forms of his own to bring freshness to his improvisations, including the clever modulation of repeated phrases and the use of harmonically acute intervals. More than any young soloist I am familiar with he uses shading and dynamics to move the narrative along, its peaks and valleys creating contrast and interest and purpose — a refreshing change in a world of "higher, louder, faster." (Paying one's dues has its virtues: Dmitry takes great pleasure in his ability, learned from years of doing restaurant gigs, to play very, very softly. Don't want to disturb the patrons as they chow down and make small talk.)

Nowhere are these qualities put to better cumulative effect than in Dmitry's stunning rendering of the Duke's *Self Portrait (of the Bean)*. Sometimes a soloist catches lightning

in a bottle (that's the whole idea) and Dmitry's solo here does just that: it is as tender, wise and mature as one could ever hope for from a musician. A thing of beauty is a joy forever, indeed.

Of course, Dmitry is not working alone on "The Composers." He is supported by an A-list coterie of New York's finest cats. This CD marks the first time Dmitry has worked with pianist David Hazeltine, a "musician's musician" well known to serious jazz fans and followers of Sharp Nine Records. Dmitry comments, "I've never worked with Dave before but I've heard him countless times. He is an extremely important voice in the music scene these days, both as a hip and super-swinging piano player and as an outstanding composer and arranger. I was very happy that we were able to get him on the date!"

Dmitry opines that Peter Bernstein, who casts his strong imprint on three tunes, "is one of the best jazz

musicians around — not just on guitar, but on any instrument. I've known Peter for a long time and have gigged and recorded with him. He has his own unmistakable voice and personality." Dmitry uses him on this album to create trumpet-like voicings — having him play the melody with the saxophone. "I've always liked the sound of an alto and guitar playing the melody together, especially having the guitar part be the top voice, as we do on *Gaslight* and *To Whom It May Concern*."

On bass is Dmitry's personal friend of long standing, John Webber. A rock-steady and swinging timekeeper, he is also one of the most gifted bass soloists on the scene. Dmitry laments that John is so in demand that he doesn't get to use him on gigs as often as he'd like, though he did get to share the bandstand with him during a week-long engagement in Chicago with Cedar Walton several years ago.



Finally, we have drummer Jason Brown, the sole holdover from Dmitry's first Sharp Nine release, "Down With It." "Jason is one of the best young drummers around. He's very knowledgeable about the music, has an incredible ear and brings an unmistakable presence to the proceedings. Having him on a gig or a recording date guarantees that you are getting a first-rate, heavy-swinging drummer who is going to bring great personality to the playing situation."

So there you have it: great musicians playing classic compositions written by members of the jazz pantheon. It may take some a few listens to discover the many nuances lurking below the surface. Take your time. These tunes have been around for a while and the performances on this record, while new, will similarly endure. Hidden pleasures abound.

—Marc Edelman  
Westfield, NJ

[www.sharpnine.com](http://www.sharpnine.com)



Dmitry Baevsky

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1 **Ojos de Rojo** Cedar Walton / BMI 6:30  
2 **Gaslight** Duke Pearson / BMI 6:12  
3 **Mister Chairman** Wayne Shorter / BMI 5:52  
4 **To Whom It May Concern** Horace Silver / ASCAP 5:29  
5 **Self Portrait (of the Bean)** Duke Ellington / ASCAP 7:37  
6 **Swift as the Wind** Tadd Dameron / ASCAP 6:15  
7 **Smoke Signal** Gigi Gryce / ASCAP 4:17  
8 **Three Wishes** Herbie Hancock / BMI 6:02  
9 **Tears Inside** Ornette Coleman / ASCAP 4:49

TOTAL TIME 53:06

Peter Bernstein

John Webber

David Hazeltine

DMITRY BAEVSKY

THE

HANCOCK

WALTON

DAMERON

PEARSON

COLEMAN

SHORTER

ELLINGTON

GRYCE

SILVER

PETER BERNSTEIN | DAVID HAZELTINE  
JOHN WEBBER | JASON BROWN

records