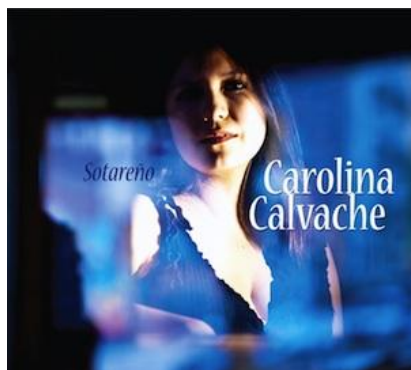


WBGO RADAR



CAROLINA CALVACHE: SOTAREÑO



Jazz came to find Carolina Calvache, and is finding her still.

The 28-year-old Colombian started playing classical piano at age six in her hometown of Cali, and by thirteen was composing her own melodies and Colombian *pasillos*.

That fateful year, a friend lent her the one jazz record in his collection, by Chick Corea's Elektric Band. These were new sounds to her ears, and they changed her life.

"I went to the record he gave me, and listened to it the whole week," she recalls with a smile. "I was like, 'Oh, my god! My mom was going crazy.'"

She began to listen to Keith Jarrett and Hank Mobley, but it took another three years to hear her first live jazz, when Jerry and Andy Gonzalez's Fort Apache Band visited the city. In the meantime, she found a mentor, Jaime Henau, who was putting together a big band at her conservatory.

Henau introduced her to jazz harmony and sent her to jazz workshops in Bogota, the nation's capital. There she met Spanish pianist Iñaki Sandoval, who encouraged her to record a demo and apply for a scholarship at the University of North Texas. She was accepted, and came to the United States.

At UNT, she had the chance to write and arrange for ensembles, and to develop her own approach. She found inspirations in the work of younger Latin American jazz musicians like pianists Danilo Perez and Edward Simon and saxophonist Miguel Zenón.

"He's showing us traditional songs through his own personal sound, but at the same time, he's introducing his folklore to the world," she says. "I realized this is something I wanted to continue doing - working with all these influences, but in a jazz style."

She was also entranced by the work of trombonist Bob Brookmeyer, and once spent an entire month immersed in his compositions.

Two weeks after graduating from UNT in 2010, she moved to New York City, where she met Venezuelan pianist Luis Perdomo. Perdomo encouraged her desire to create an original hybrid of jazz with her Colombian roots, and introduced her to many of the musicians on *Sotareño*, her debut on Sunnyside Records.

The album features Michael Rodriguez on trumpet, Jaleel Shaw on alto saxophone, Hans Grawisch on bass, as well as Ludwing Afonso and Antonio Sanchez on drums.

The album's title track, *El Sotareño*, takes a well-known folk tune about Sotara, her father's hometown in the Andean foothills. She reprises the song as a poignant solo improvisation at the end of the album.

"Early in the mornings, you'll hear groups of local people walking with flutes playing traditional *bambucos* and *pasillos*," she says. "My idea was to keep the melody and then step in and out of the

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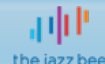
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tradition.”

“Stella” was written as a gift for her mother, a singer.

“She’s very melodic; I took my sense of ballads from her, even though she doesn’t know it,” says Calvache.

“Lluvia” is one of three melodies on the disc she wrote at UNT, which she then transformed as compositions after arriving in New York. “Too Soon” is an homage to Brookmeyer.

“When I came here, my life changed,” she says. “It expanded, based on what I started to hear around me.”

“Melodia Triste” and “Te Agradezco” are both written in Colombia’s traditional *pasillo*, waltz-like 6/8 rhythm.

Calvache’s confident debut marks the arrival of an articulate, lyrical and imaginative voice in jazz that deserves to be celebrated. She and her band will do so [on April 15 at New York’s DROM at 8 p.m.](#)

- *Tim Wilkins, WBGO digital content producer*

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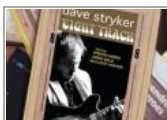


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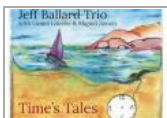


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