



**Doug
Beavers
Luna**

Few objects inspire artists as enduringly as the moon. 4.5 billion years young, the moon fuels our passion while remaining the mysterious cyclical force that routinely sparks our creativity. Even wolves understand this. Brilliantly lit, clouded into crescents, eclipsed, and gorgeously present when full, the moon's gravity charms everything from bays and oceans to dance, literature, visual art, and of course music. *Luna (Moon)*, buoyed by an award from the Chamber Music America's 'New Jazz Works' Commission (funded by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation), is trombonist Doug Beavers' latest chapter in an intriguing career of making music that artfully bends rules instead of haphazardly breaking them.

Luna taps into advancing Beavers' proven formula where the meticulous arranging of salsa and Latin Jazz becomes even more dynamic when flavored with the colorful nuance of rock, classical, R&B and soul. Honoring the core stipulation of the award, Beavers trimmed down his working unit to a "chamber ensemble" of nine players; radically less than the twenty to thirty musicians often called upon in past projects. Harnessing a variety of musicianship to shape *Luna's* sound, this calibrated

group maintains the vivacious energy Beavers' bands are known for, deftly managing everything from swinging through complex chord changes to turning hot salsa tunes into roaring parties of sound.

As a dedicated devotee of the alchemy that polishes songs into melodic gems, Beavers fundamentally understands how the intrinsic nature of creative interplay can make for transcendent composing and arranging. What might sound simple, something you might instinctively hum or dance to, is the result of Beavers mapping out where the math of music nudges the elasticity of musical genres to places where they compliment and inherently flow together. Perhaps nothing motivates this process more than the vast treasure of riches within the expansive tradition of Pan-Latin musical artistry.

Like *Sol*, *Luna* possesses Beavers' signature "*á la carte*" mentality where touches of soul, R&B, classical, rock, and folkloric music are neatly embedded within compositions exploring the state of his artistry at this stage of his career. Laced within these musical "Easter eggs," Beavers routinely balances a deference for complex musical forms and lyrical story-telling, with an encyclopedic understanding of elite arranging, the flexible compositional foundation of salsa, and its inexhaustible engine, the clave. *Luna* excels by leveraging forward harmonic structures,

extended harmonies, precise orchestration and Beavers' intuitive practice of letting his ear animate the treasure hunt of his unique creative practice.

"Before I write a note, I'm hearing the personalities of the musicians I'm working with. I can already hear in my mind's ear what the song's going to sound like." And man, do they sound good! Aided by the confidence of so much challenging arranging throughout his career, Beavers' talents lean into musical aspirations where compositions can innovate without sounding contrite or conceived. As he explains, "I lead with where my ear is takes me. If my ear is calling for it, then I figure out a way musically and technically to put it in there because it's coming from somewhere." Using *Art of the Arrangement* and *Sol* as templates, Beavers has positioned *Luna* with top notch musicianship and fresh modalities into a musical journal backed by having become more established, confident, and comfortable in his own skin.

When asked what makes *Luna* so different, Beavers enthusiastically responds "More of me!" And luckily for us, it's a lot more. Along with the financial and creative agency made possible by Chamber Music America, Beavers' latest homage to the striking beaches of Sitges, Spain provided the kind of tranquility and environmental stimulation that fostered an ideal space to write the next chapter of his musical life. Harnessing his "mini big band," *Luna* has

allowed Beavers to combine commissioned pieces with exciting new original compositions that extend his already advanced musical vocabulary into some of the most forward work since his 2010 album *Two Shades of Nude*.

After the seductive calm of a short introduction, *Luna* opens with *Tidal*, the first of six songs from the *Luna Suite* commissioned by Chamber Music America. Up tempo, dynamic, melismatic, incorporating wave after wave of layered intention, *Tidal* immediately sets the tone for what Beavers is trying to achieve. Horn choruses reign supreme as the arrangement artfully blends complex chord changes with the sparkling energy of percussionists Luisito Quintero and Camilo Molina, while bassist Jerry Madera and bass trombonist Max Seigel anchor the tune with the rich musical molasses of some seriously deep low end lines.

Reflejo del Sol (Reflection of the Sun) becomes a musical double entendre as the song's title describes not only the visual inspiration for the composition, but its reflexive melody which literally is reversed from that of the title track of Beavers' last album *Sol*. Channeling the vibe of Brazilian composer Ivan Guimarães Lins, along with the subtle touch of baroque aesthetics, *Reflejo del Sol* inspires as mystically as the setting sun. Scattered across the FM dial, *Las Piedras (The Stones)* answers the question of what reggae sounds like when adapted to Afro-Cuban

rhythms, Stevie Wonder-like horn refrains, and the electricity of a seasoned salsa arrangement. Saxophonist Ivan Renta and Beavers weigh in with lively solos as percussionists Quintero and Molina's incantations boil above Siegel's resonant bass trombone.

With lyrics written by flutist and vocalist Jeremy Bosch, *Multicolores (Many Colors)* strides forward as an ambitious salsa tune doubling as an anthem for embracing the resilience of diversity. "Through the diversity the beauty arrives for us!" sings Bosch as the band drifts through a gorgeous chart that speaks to Beavers' ability to weave together quartal harmonies from the established threads of salsa, R&B and Latin Jazz. Honoring the traditional orientation of boleros, the album's title track Luna gently unfolds with the somber clasp of horns and percussion – a fitting resolve to the suite section of the album.

Venturing into deeper waters, *Sea* takes us into a flow where Beavers' extensive arranging chops effortlessly crystallize a tune powered by supple energy of a mambo, but also punctuated by the advanced sophistication of Latin Jazz. Veteran drummer Robby Ameen helps steer *Sea* through its elaborate paces as solos by vibraphonist Joe Locke and guitarist Paul Bollenback propel the song forward before Beavers' final trombone passage takes us home over dense harmonies created by a choir of clarinets. Originally composed in 1976 by Brazilian guitarist

Djavan Caetano Viana, *Flor de Lis (Lily Flower)* has both structural and sentimental roots for Beavers. Arranged for five trombones for the upcoming Trombonanza conference in Santa Fe, Argentina, *Flor de Lis* features Conrad Herwig, Francisco Torres and Max Siegel on this enduring classic. With its catchy romantic melody, *Flor de Lis* also became the perfect soundtrack for Beavers recent proposal to his fiancé earlier this year in Sitges.

Dedicated to the life of Caroline Buckman, a prominent first call violist for a variety of popular Hollywood scores, *Sands of Time* is perhaps the most endearing track on the album. Capturing the emotional ambiguity of our mortality, *Sands of Time* utilizes a steady solemn refrain bound to the thematic references of Elliot Del Borgo's *Fantasia for Strings* and the harmonic horn stylings from early Brecker Brother recordings. While initially struggling to compose this emotionally complicated song, Beavers embraced the ancient process of letting go. "You just keep writing even while you might feel lost. Sometimes you just have to let the music guide your hand knowing you'll figure it out." Closing with the gospel wisdom of vocalist Ada Dyer, the band sings "We are the sands of time. Through harmony you'll find."

Complex but simple. Forward but grounded. None of these principles are oxymoronic to Beavers. With clarity as his compass, he assembles music that inspires, educates, takes chances

and remains approachable; balancing the role of innovation with the hunger of wanting people to sing and dance along with the music. To Beavers, it's been a constant push towards maturing as an artist. "It's not that I'm intending specific directions, I'm just exploring as I continue to grow as a composer, arranger, and orchestrator. That's why I feel like composers start to bloom in their mid-forties, which is where I'm at."

Great composers and arrangers don't bend art to their will. Instead they use their sheer will to amend the rules they're willing to bend to make great art. Harnessing tradition, creating open canvases with keen edges that define where one can balance innovation with artistic discipline, great art often begins with simple questions. Who am I now? Where am I going as a musician? And how can I orchestrate unique ways to get there? With *Luna*, Doug Beavers answers these questions with a defining album that ingeniously sorts out the pieces of his own maturing artistic identity, while creating music that can't help but uplift and educate audiences who embrace it. For Beavers, life and music are intimately intertwined. "When you're composing, you're really commenting about life, and the music that flows into you." With that flow, Doug Beavers has again answered the call of *La Luna*, harnessing its power to create music that's sure to make you howl at the moon.