



▲ Director Fernando Trueba

who love Charlie Parker or Dizzy or Chano Pozo already have their records at home. What's the point of making a movie for that? Recreating it was a much better challenge."

The new versions were recorded by three different bands in Havana, New York and Madrid. Valdés arranged and conducted the smaller Madrid band, Jorge Reyes played that

role in Havana and Michael Mossman arranged and directed the New York orchestra. (The soundtrack also includes tracks from *Bebo de Cuba* and *Bebo*.) "So when you hear a Bebo composition, it's him on piano, even the new versions of them," says Chediak. "In the updated version of 'Con Poco Coco' [Valdés' piece from the groundbreaking Cuban jam session in 1952],

that's him on piano."

The music scenes also include cameos by jazz icons such as Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, Nat "King" Cole and Ben Webster, interpreted by living musicians playing in character. Freddy Cole "appears" as his brother Nat, Jimmy Heath becomes Ben Webster, Mike Mossman plays Dizzy, Yaroldi Abreu becomes Chano Pozo and Germán Velazco takes a turn as Charlie Parker. "Once we decided that we were going to include the moment when jazz meets Cuban music, that led us to the idea of including Chano Pozo as a character in the plot and mixing truth and fiction and including the cameos," says Trueba. "We had a great time playing around with all that."

Still, he says, "I was concerned that the musicians would be offended by me asking them to 'play like.' But they understood what we were doing, they embraced it, and it was great fun." In some cases, the results were dramatically successful.

"I remember Paquito [D'Rivera] coming out after watching the movie and asking me, 'Who the hell plays Dizzy? It's perfect,'" recalls Trueba. And he tells the story of how, a few months after the sessions, Valdés was visiting him at his home and the film's soundtrack was playing in the background. "And we were talking and when 'Con Poco Coco' comes on, Bebo stops in midsentence and

says, 'Listen. That's [trumpeter] El Negro Vivar,'" recalls Trueba with a chuckle. "And I had to tell him that actually that was the new recording and that was Carlos Sarduy."

After completing the film, and before the official premiere, Trueba traveled to Málaga, in the south of Spain where Valdés now lives, and rented a movie theater to show it to the *maestro* and to flamenco singer Estrella Morente, who stars as herself in the movie and, as it turns out, also lives in that city.

"Bebo came with Rosemarie [his wife, who has since passed] and Estrella with her husband, Javier. And the four watched in the empty theater and at the end, they were all crying. I had never seen Bebo cry. And when he sees me, he kisses my hand and hugs me and says, 'When I'm gone, the people will still watch this movie and will hear my music.' And that's when I understood that for Bebo, as a musician, that was the greatest gift of this movie. For me, that was a moment of pure happiness that I'll never forget."

FERNANDO GONZALEZ

On Sept. 18, Chico & Rita is being released in a Limited Edition Collector's Set including Blu-ray and DVD discs, an audio CD and a 16-page excerpt from the graphic novel based on the film. Single Blu-ray and DVD versions will also be available.

Playing With Genre

POSITIVE CATASTROPHE CONNECTS SALSA AND THE AVANT-GARDE, MUSIC AND LITERATURE, BRAINS AND BRAWN

The music of Taylor Ho Bynum, 37, the prolific cornetist who leads or co-leads groups of various sizes and helps run the Firehouse 12 label, can't

be categorized without a lot of hyphenated descriptions. When discussing his work, Bynum likes a term used by his former teacher and ongoing associate

Anthony Braxton: "'Transidiomatic'—[the idea] that you acknowledge, respect and draw from idiom, but you don't let yourself be defined by, or lim-

ited by, the idiom," he explains. "It's an embrace of it and a freedom from it at the same time."

Percussionist Abraham Gomez-Delgado, 40, has an even

wider take on how his own music might be classified. He started to take music seriously after his first love, painting, became less artistically fulfilling. "I know I'm a musician, but I've always considered it an art project," says Gomez-Delgado, who once led a band that has been described as Latin no-wave salsa-rock.

These highly inclusive philosophies define Positive Catastrophe, a 10-piece band combining the rhythms of Latin music with driving charts that evoke Sun Ra or Charles Mingus and think nothing of flying into free territory. The band's second album, *Dibrujo, Dibrujo ...* (Cuneiform), includes a four-movement title piece named for a blend of two Spanish words meaning "drawing" and "sorcerer"; another

suite features lyrics taken from classic literature that, in one instance, get translated into Spanish and played over a Latin groove. There's far more concept to this band than catastrophe.

Gomez-Delgado grew up with traditional Latin music and suddenly discovered free jazz during adolescence. "It was so different from Latin music, but then I started seeing a lot of similarities politically and in terms of race," he says. "So I wanted to combine rhythmic African Diaspora music with the textures of free jazz." He met Bynum in Boston during the late '90s, when both were in college. They began collaborating soon after, and when both later relocated to New York City and were attempting to form their own large ensembles, they decided it made sense

to combine bands. "We realized we were sharing about half the musicians, so we thought, let's just make this easy," Bynum says.

Gomez-Delgado originally wanted to call his band *Garabatos*, which translates to "doodles." "The idea was to make a lot of quick, very simple compositions of mostly *plena* rhythms," he says, referring to the folkloric music of his native Puerto Rico. "Just instrumental music. It would all be like doodles." (Positive Catastrophe titled its 2009 debut *Garabatos Volume One*.)

Bynum, whose work can blur composition and improvisation, says Positive Catastrophe represents the first time he's let himself play with genre. "It's always difficult to define the music. We get lumped into the jazz thing, and with Abra-

ham, the salsa thing," he says. "Ultimately, I think with all of our interests, [the band] tries to move past definition."

On the new album, Bynum's "Lessons Learned From Seafaring Tales" does this to a great extent. In three movements, he lifts texts from Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim* and, skipping ahead to the current century, David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas*, giving each a vocal melody. Sung by accordionist Kamala Sankaram, the melodies are by turns operatic or evocative of Carla Bley's *Escalator Over the Hill*. On the Conrad-based "Perhaps the Artist Was a Little Mad," sung in Spanish, the melody finds a groove. An avid reader, Bynum was inspired after noticing analogies between sea journeys and creative

✦ Positive Thinkers: Abraham Gomez-Delgado (left) and Taylor Ho Bynum



PETER GANNUSHKIN/DOWNTOWNMUSIC.NET

music. "A band really exists very much like a ship: You have one or two captains, you have a crew. You go on journeys where you don't really know where you're going to end up," he says.

The four movements of the title suite, "Dibrujo, Dibrujo, Dibrujo..." (which demonstrates further irreverence by

misspelling the titular word in each movement), offer a good example of tradition and modernity working together. Beginning with poignant accordion that quickly gets rowdy, it goes on to include layers of horns blowing around each other, finally climaxing in a *plena* marked by the composer's wild whooping over

Michaël Attias' baritone.

You might be tempted to say that Bynum brings the compositional intellect to the group while Gomez-Delgado brings the feel, but the visceral overtakes the cerebral on Bynum's "Garrison Ascending," the disc's 12-minute swinger inspired by a Jimmy Garrison bass solo.

Things can't be delineated so clearly in *Positive Catastrophe*, and that's a good thing. "We're very much musical brothers, but at the same time we come from very different perspectives, and have different strengths and weaknesses," Bynum says. "So I think it's worth it." **MIKE SHANLEY**

Farewells

Von Freeman, the saxophone legend intrinsically tied to the city of Chicago, died Aug. 13 of heart failure in his beloved hometown. He was 88. Freeman, the father of fellow tenor saxophonist Chico Freeman, was named an NEA Jazz Master this

year. Although he was known worldwide, Freeman largely remained in the Chicago area throughout his career, regularly turning down offers to join with better-known musicians who might have boosted his public profile. His music was similarly

uncompromising, flirting with free jazz and other elements of the avant-garde but owing much to bop convention.

Shimrit Shoshan, a highly regarded up-and-coming Israeli pianist on the NYC scene, died

Aug. 19 at Columbia Presbyterian Hospital in New York. The cause, according to her press representative, was cardiac arrest. She was 29. Shoshan began playing organ and flute at age 8 and later matriculated at the Thelma Yellin School of the Arts. She came to New York in the 2000s, studying at the City College of New York and the New School. Her teachers included Kenny Barron, Reggie Workman and Charles Tolliver. Shoshan appeared at some of the best jazz rooms in New York City, and released her debut recording as a leader, *Keep It Movin'*, in 2010.

Byard Lancaster, a prominent presence in Philadelphia's jazz history, died Aug. 23 in Wyndmoor, Penn. He was 70 and the cause was cancer. Best known for his work on tenor, alto and soprano saxophones, Lancaster also played piano, flute and clarinet. He worked with Elvin Jones and Archie Shepp before joining the band of drummer Sunny Murray, with whom he began recording in 1965. Veering toward the avant-garde side of the jazz spectrum, Lancaster played with Bill Dixon, Sun Ra and, in the 1970s, McCoy Tyner. Lancaster's debut as a leader was 1966's *It's Not Up to Us*, for Atlantic Records. He recorded sporadically after that, releasing most of his solo work in the 2000s.

Ilhan Mimaroglu, 86, a Turkish musician and composer whose greatest recognition in the West came from his production for Charles Mingus, died July 17 in New York City. The cause was pneumonia.

News from JazzTimes.com

► In July, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) announced the four newest NEA Jazz Masters. Joining the list of 124 previously recognized honorees are Mose Allison, Lou Donaldson, Lorraine Gordon and Eddie Palmieri. The annual NEA Jazz Masters awards ceremony and concert will take place on Jan. 14, in conjunction with Jazz at Lincoln Center.

► Also in July, Chamber Music America (CMA) announced the recipients of its 35th annual grant program. Ten of this year's 38 recipients are composer-led jazz ensembles, which were selected from among 167 applicants. The grantees, who will receive a total of \$230,000 for the composition and performance of new music, were selected in the spring. Among the recipients are ensembles led by Steve Lehman, Darrell Grant, Samuel Torres and Chris Dingman.

► The 20th anniversary of the first Jazz Composers Collective concert is this fall, and to commemorate the occasion, its founding members—Ben Allison (bass), Michael Blake (saxophone), Ron Horton (trumpet), Frank Kimbrough (piano) and Ted Nash (saxophone)—will lead 11 bands at the Jazz Composers Collective 20th Anniversary Festival. The shows will take place at Jazz Standard in New York City, Nov. 6-11.

► A previously unissued live recording of the late saxophonist/flutist/pianist Sam Rivers, *Reunion: Live in New York*, will be released on Sept. 25 on the Pi label. The date captures Rivers with his trio of Dave Holland on bass and Barry Altschul on drums, performing at the Miller Theatre at Columbia University in 2007. The trio had not played together in 25 years when this concert took place.

► On Jan. 10-11 in New York City, the Jazz Connect conference will bring together a broad range of elements and constituencies of the jazz community in a series of workshops, panels, plenaries and special events, all dedicated to expanding the worldwide audience for jazz. The event is organized by *JazzTimes* and the Jazz Forward Coalition, and is supported by the Association of Performing Arts Presenters (APAP).