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CHARLES LLOYD MANHATTAN STORIES

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CHARLES LLOYD MANHATTAN STORIES

GÁBOR SZABÓ | RON CARTER | PETE LA ROCA



Generally, fans hate change while artists thrive on it. Jazz fans took the dissolution of the classic John Coltrane Quartet and the mid-'60s Miles Davis Quintet as hard as they took the news of all the violence and conflict and injustice that characterized the era. Thankfully, on the other hand, artists can't sit still creatively. In 1960, Chico Hamilton was leading a version of his quintet with a young alto saxophonist/flutist named Charles Lloyd. The band was modeled after his groundbreaking 1955 quintet with Buddy Collette, Jim Hall, and Fred Katz, but it was sounding tired and unoriginal. They were recording songs from *Bye Bye Birdie* and *Irma la Douce*, for Chrissakes!

Chico knew what needed to be done — new blood, new direction. In 1962, he emerged with a new quintet with different instrumentation and an entirely new sound. Charles Lloyd was still there, but now he was playing tenor sax instead of alto, which blended beautifully with Garnett Brown's trombone. The rhythm section consisted of Hungarian guitarist Gábor Szabó, who had a fresh sound and style all his own, and an 18-year-old wonder on bass by the name of Albert Stinson. And, notably, the band's book was being written almost exclusively by Lloyd.

From 1963–64, this band (George Bohanon replaced Brown during that first year) recorded four albums on three different labels. What was immediately evident was that Lloyd was an astonishingly original and prolific composer and soloist. His sound on tenor sax and flute were as distinctive as Gábor's on guitar. And their blend was a magical thing to behold. Both of them had a vulnerability in their playing that was immediately evident and attractive.

In 1964, Charles left Chico's band to join the Cannonball Adderley Sextet. Although Cannon featured a number of Lloyd's originals and gave him plenty of solo space, it was a musical mismatch. I remember seeing the band at one of those midtown Manhattan clubs that came and went quickly; Charles was off to the side stage left, away from the band looking professorial and somewhat aloof in his three-piece tweed suit and wire-rimmed glasses, while the rest of the band in their black mohair gig suits was bearing down on the groove. It became popular in some circles at the time to accuse Charles of being a Coltrane clone. It was a ridiculous statement that was also inflicted upon Wayne Shorter during his time with Art Blakey.

On two sessions that were almost a year apart (May 1964 and March 1965), Charles brought Gábor Szabó, Ron Carter, and Tony Williams into the studio to record the magnificent *Of Course, Of Course*, his second album for Columbia Records. In July '65, they became the Charles Lloyd Quartet with Pete La Roca on drums. In October, Albert Stinson took over the bass seat in the group and they recorded four tunes on Lloyd's final Columbia date, two of which appeared as bonus tracks on the CD version of *Of Course, Of Course*.



The two live performances presented here occurred between July and September of 1965 and represent the only live documentation of this amazing band. We get to hear them stretch out as they never did in the studio

The year 1965 was a wild time for jazz and for the arts scene in New York City. Don Heckman's essay elsewhere in the package invokes the name of cellist Charlotte Moorman in relation to an avant-garde festival that led to the Judson Hall concert. Anything was possible on the avant-garde scene and there was always someone willing to do whatever was proposed. The New York Art Quartet co-led by John Tchicai and Roswell Rudd with a variety of bassists and drummers was advertised at a 57th Street art gallery. I couldn't resist, but when I arrived there was no bassist or drummer. Instead, Charlotte Moorman was on cello and a guy named Hugh Glover was on vacuum cleaner!

At the intermission, I went up to say hello to Roswell when Charlotte asked me if I could identify any music critics in the audience because she wanted to cut their ties off at the beginning of the second half. I demurred and struck up a conversation with Hugh Glover, telling him that he looked very familiar. Finally, he leaned into me and said in a sotto voce, "I'm Hugh Lawson, the pianist. I just use this name for gigs like this." He played a hell of a vacuum cleaner, too.

In 1966, Gábor Szabó decided make his own albums and lead his own quartet. Charles Lloyd assembled a new band with Keith Jarrett, Cecil McBee, and Jack DeJohnette. And although much of its live repertoire came from originals that Lloyd had introduced in earlier ensembles, they took on a new identity in this new context. The careers of Charles and Gábor would take different directions and although they made guest appearances on each other's albums in 1972, their musical partnership was essentially done soon after these live performances.

Almost 50 years later, Charles has built an amazingly varied and vital body of work with one extraordinary ensemble after another. He has made masterful music with Michel Petrucciani, Bobo Stenson, Geri Allen, Jason Moran, Billy Higgins, Eric Harland, and Zakir Hussain, to name just a few of the great musicians with whom he has formed a strong musical bond.

—Michael Cuscuna





CHARLES LLOYD PERFORMING LIVE AT JUDSON HALL

Charles Lloyd's status as one of the iconic figures of jazz has been thoroughly established for nearly five decades. His recordings from the '60s — especially releases such as *Of Course*, *Of Course*, *Dream Weaver*, and *Forest Flower* — introduced a stunning, new jazz saxophone talent at a time when new ideas were rapidly being triggered by the likes of John Coltrane, Ornette Coleman, and Eric Dolphy.

But Lloyd had a voice of his own, one that blended rich, contemplative improvising with an irresistible flow of dynamic rhythms. Jazz critic Peter Watrous identified it as “a strange and beautiful distillation of the American experience, part abandoned and wild, part immensely controlled and sophisticated.” The description was on target, and one could also mention the presence of a growing, inventive imagination in Lloyd's playing, a unique talent surfacing at a time when most of his jazz contemporaries were struggling to find their own personal forms of expression.

No wonder *Down Beat* selected Lloyd as Jazz Artist of the Year in 1967. Fortunately, Lloyd's arrival on the jazz stage in the '60s from his Tennessee roots was chronicled in more than a dozen albums, as both a leader and a sideman.

The live recording from Judson Hall came about in an unexpected fashion. In the mid-'60s, I was working with the remarkable cellist, Charlotte Moorman, in the establishment of her New York Festival of the Avant-Garde. The annual event was a cutting-edge experience, occasionally taking place in such unlikely settings as Central Park and a Staten Island ferry boat, featuring artists from the avant-garde worlds of music, video, painting, and “happenings”. On

rare occasions, Moorman was receptive to including a concert venue, usually Manhattan's Judson Hall. And when the third Festival rolled around in 1965, she asked if I would organize a program of adventurous jazz artists.

Charles Lloyd was at the top of my list of possible participants, especially the group he led at the time that featured the stellar presence of Hungarian guitarist, Gábor Szabó, bassist Ron Carter, and drummer Pete La Roca Sims. The concert I put together also included inimitable jazz vocalist Sheila Jordan, the Jimmy Giuffre 3, and the little big band I then led with saxophonist Ed Summerlin.

It was sheer good fortune that all of my choices — each of them high-visibility artists, including the prime players in my own band — agreed to participate. And they did so pro bono, since the Festival of the Avant-Garde had minimal (if any) funds to pay the artists.

Little did we know then that some of the performances — especially the Lloyd set — would wind up, nearly fifty years later, on a beautiful album. At the time, however, making a live recording of the concert — the only jazz event in the third annual New York Festival of the Avant-Garde — was not in the original planning. But the possibility of doing so opened up when George Klabin, a Columbia University student with portable recording equipment, offered to preserve the entire program on audio tape.

It was an offer we couldn't refuse, in part because of the opportunity to have a high-quality recording of a rare evening of cutting-edge, contemporary jazz performed by world-class jazz artists. Add to that the fact that Klabin was not only a prime audio producer, he was (and still is) a knowledgeable jazz fan with a sensitive ear for improvisational music at its best. And the quality of sound present on this CD, nearly five decades after the original performance, attests to the care, the concern, and the expertise with which Klabin approached the challenging live recording at Judson Hall.

Let's take a look at each of the three compelling Charles Lloyd Quartet tracks preserved by Klabin. Two of the pieces, “Sweet Georgia Bright” and “How Can I Tell You” — both originals by Lloyd — are also present on his first album, *Discovery!*. The third, “Lady Gabor”, is a tune by guitarist Gábor Szabó.

“Sweet Georgia Bright”: The program kicks off with this stunning, 17+ minute display of Lloyd's tenor saxophone at its finest. Like most young

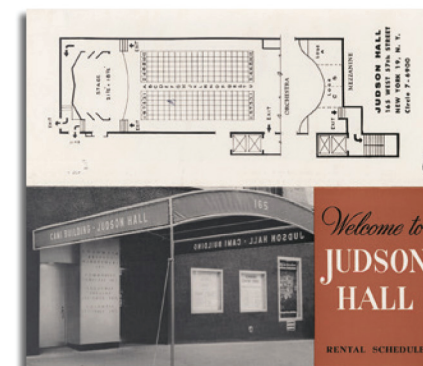
saxophonists — Lloyd was still in his twenties when the concert took place — he had listened closely to the envelope-stretching excursions of John Coltrane. But Lloyd grabbed that influence and converted it into something unique and special of his own. Soaring across the tenor saxophone's higher harmonics, articulating his mid-range lines with virtuosic imagination, propelling it all with an inherent rhythmic drive, he invests every note with improvisational mastery. Note, too, the brilliant, inventive exchanges between Lloyd and Szabó at the start of the track, followed with equally gripping soloing from the other players.

“How Can I Tell You”: Lloyd's warmly emotional ballad inspires yet another of his remarkable solos. Here, too, he moves across the far-ranging territory of his horn with astonishing musical alacrity, backed superbly by Carter's bass. Halfway through the tune, Szabó steps into the spotlight with Carter, occasionally sprinkling his jazz-driven improvising with seasoning from his Hungarian roots. Carter's solo follows, reminding us of why he subsequently became the most recorded bassist in jazz history.

“Lady Gabor”: Performed and recorded a few years earlier when Szabó and Lloyd were members of the Chico Hamilton Quintet, “Lady Gabor” showcases yet another of Lloyd's remarkable musical skills — his flute playing. By the time he reaches the closing passages, he manages to express every imaginable sound the instrument can produce, incorporating them all into his continually astonishing solos. Szabó adds his own touches, urging the piece to flow with modal-like melodies and a surging 6/4 rhythm once again suggesting Hungarian roots.

Having been there when the performance and the recording took place, I can confirm the authenticity of these remarkable tracks. Hearing each tune immediately calls up delicious memories of what it was like to be part of this remarkable evening of music. Listen closely, and you'll acquire your own list of musical pleasures.

—Don Heckman



When these works were collectively improvised in 1965, one could already hear the originality of the sound Charles Lloyd breathed and blew through the tenor saxophone, a singular timbre that went beyond the effect of the influences on his playing by Sonny Rollins and John Coltrane, perhaps the two contemporary grand masters of that horn during those years, improvising so well and with such impressive command of the moment in the middle of the bandstand context that other forces in the music are too often ignored or overlooked.

Part of what made Charles Lloyd such an important young master himself was the evident fact that he was making a summation of what the fine composer, bandleader, and tenor saxophonist, Jimmy Heath, calls all attempts to grasp “the sound of music” in one’s horn. The sound of music transcends all styles and admits only versions of itself through the shapeless door of the air and into the unlimited vistas of any instruments. So on these pieces we hear whatever made the sound of music for Charles Lloyd’s ears. Like Rollins and Coltrane, part of his presence was formed by all of the musicians he respected or revered, on or off his horn. Every single note looks forward and bends backward; sometimes, or many times, contradicting a very strong statement and an equally strong alternate position, separating worlds of emotion, memory, and dreams with a sole note, or tonal shift, or interval.

One can hear his appreciation of Ellington and Monk at nearly every turn because he recognized their conceptions as much as the literal notes and phrases which might have been enough for a hard-studying and practicing journeyman, satisfied with patterns or études, but not for one doing as much as he could to fulfill what Rollins and Coltrane had done with Ellington’s shifting voicings and timbres, to give such variety of expression through use of every possible mute, use of embouchures, and distances of tones from one another. Lloyd also figured out Monk’s use of motifs to give form to his own extremely unique piano playing. Lloyd’s vast intelligence made it possible for him to understand how far above the simple act of copying, perceiving the power of a conception is. He comprehended well how important form and logic were to Rollins and the older saxophonist’s guru, Thelonious Monk.

Lloyd, exactly like Joe Henderson and Wayne Shorter, understood all of that and his understanding opened him up to his own individuality. It was free of the unwieldy burden of hostility, and helped define the inept, or pretentious, or adolescent vanguard’s celebration of determined ugliness. Lloyd’s music was too optimistic to descend into the mistakes of the time that were celebrated by lightweight East Village intellectuals. His band pursued fresh victories, such

as we hear on “Sweet Georgia Bright”. This music does not take seriously the ideas assumed to give automatic victory to those still overwhelmed by Baudelaire’s brilliance. These men did not mistake the French writer’s embracing of decadence, cruelty, and violence as a way to fight off the powers of convention. They knew it was too late in the world for anything other than the bittersweet force and finesse of the blues and swing.

The music featured here is very good and benefits from all of the available technology necessary to bring forth the highly refined sound created by this particular Charles Lloyd Quartet, a rare version of a basically unknown band of players who had been very close to new frontiers and had been traveling right to the edge of them and beyond, building civilized “towns” from the ground up. They were exactly the kind of men the great pianist, Herbie Nichols, claimed were all over the jazz world. All more than accidentally well-educated men, they knew the primary point was to play the notes correctly and bring the heat when the moment requested it.

Lloyd had studied music at the University of Southern California. All of the members of his band had been to the levels of training and experience that made them familiar with the strengths of the art as well as its potential. So they were all there and ready.

Sometimes sounding as though referring to the theme from *The Third Man* was the Eastern European immigrant Gábor Szabó, who had come to America and attended the Berklee College of Music, where a number of fine players matriculated. Already an original, his style also alludes to the wonderful playing Jim Hall did with Sonny Rollins in the very same instrumentation.

At the time of this recording, there were more than a few bands who were driven and, playfully or empathetically, goaded by guitarists like Grant Green and Wes Montgomery. Montgomery was the one Coltrane tried to hire into his band upon hearing his radiant invention, swing, great ear, and superb beat. Things had come some distance over the years and Art Farmer also led a fine and inventive band of well-controlled volume but still plenty of heat from his flugelhorn, with Jim Hall’s guitar, Steve Swallow’s bass, and the very creative cymbal sounds of Walter Perkins and drummer Pete La Roca holding down the percussion parts. La Roca also ended up for a short time with George Russell’s high-caliber, innovative sextet, where he again swelled up the modes with Swallow, who also joined him in Paul Bley’s unrecorded but not forgotten trio that many seem to believe was the equal of the Bill Evans groups.

Having worked with symphony orchestras and recorded with many jazz

greats was the Motor City young man to watch, Ron Carter, on bass; he had already been featured with Gil Evans, Jaki Byard, Bobby Timmons, and Joe Henderson, as well as other masters or budding talents. To general astonishment, Pete La Roca Sims had already improvised one of the most outstanding solo percussion inventions ever played on any recording, *Minor Apprehension*, with Jackie McLean, released on Blue Note Records in 1959. So this was a well-trained and far-from-inept wild bunch, ready to stand up to the moment, armed only with improvised confidence.

These were some very special professionals, all revealing the characteristics that are almost stunning in our era when electronic special effects have taken precedence over what was once recognized as THE special effect: *individual talent*. That meant partially a kind of easeful control. This kind of control gave a less-than-chest-beating quality that stands up well next to the common discipline of the era. As one can hear, this is something that is still refreshing. Like all good jazz, it is based upon a collective form of recognition — knowing how to leave enough space for each player to move around in and fill to its brim, so that every instrument is clearly audible, not smothered by the all-too-common narcissistic excitement of undisciplined players who demand to be heard at all costs. Those dues are paid by the ensemble and by the audience.

No such dues are here. That is quite obvious from the first song and the interplay that melts back and forth between a quartet with the guitar part of the rhythm section, then very naturally moving into an update of New Orleans polyphony, not to mention the ensemble — wide listening that makes it all almost sound preordained, but no less miraculous since it was not. What happens is what all jazz musicians want and that Charles Lloyd got and simultaneously gave, since jazz is always a way of absorbing that is also a way of giving the best that one has.

—Stanley Crouch



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CHARLES LLOYD saxophone & flute
GÁBOR SZABÓ guitar
RON CARTER bass
PETE LA ROCA SIMS drums

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The 2xHD Fusion Mastering System: In the constant evolution of its proprietary mastering process, 2xHD has progressed to a new phase called 2xHD FUSION, integrating the finest analog, with state-of-the-art digital technology.

The mastering chain consists of a selection of high-end vacuum tube equipment. For the recordings on this album, the original 1/4" 15 ips NagraMaster curve, NAB or CCIR master tapes were played on a Nagra-T tape recorder, modified with high-end tube playback electronics, wired with OCC silver cable from the playback head direct to a Nick Doshi tube head preamplifier. The Nagra T, with its four direct drive motors, two pinch rollers and a tape tension head, has one of the best transports ever made. A custom-built carbon fiber head block and a head damping electronic system permit 2xHD FUSION to obtain a better resolution and 3D imaging.

The resulting signal is then transferred into high resolution formats by recording it in DXD using a custom 2xHD Technologies A to D converter. All analog and digital cables that are used are state-of-the-art Siltech. The 2xHD FUSION mastering system is powered by a super capacitor power supply, using a new technology that lowers the digital noise found in the lowest level of the spectrum. A vacuum tube NAGRA HD DAC X is used as a reference digital playback converter to A and B with the original analog master tape, permitting the fusion of the warmth of analog with the refinement of digital.

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CHARLES LLOYD MANHATTAN STORIES

CHARLES LLOYD SAXOPHONE & FLUTE | GÁBORSZABÓ GUITAR | RON CARTER BASS | PETE LA ROCA SIMS DRUMS

LIVE AT JUDSON HALL, NYC, SEPTEMBER 3, 1965

1. HOW CAN I TELL YOU 11:57 (CHARLES LLOYD)
2. LADY GABOR 12:50 (GABOR SZABO)
3. SWEET GEORGIA BRIGHT 17:49 (CHARLES LLOYD)

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2xHD MASTERING; RENÉ LAFLAMME

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EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS: GEORGE KLABIN & MICHAEL CUSCUNA

MIXING, EDITING & SOUND RESTORATION: GEORGE KLABIN & FRAN GALA

AT RESONANCE RECORDS STUDIOS, BEVERLY HILLS

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