

Jazz Wise Magazine (UK)

Review of Alegría CD (August 2003)

Pablo Ablanedo Octet



Fresh Sound (FSNT 156CD)

(4 Stars)

Avishai Cohen played most of the Octet's "live" rehearsal concerts, but family problems prevented him from making the record dates. He would have fitted in so naturally. Pianist-composer Ablanedo is another major talent from Argentina and this NYC recording features his country's finest plus Haskins, Scheinman, Cheek and Monder, all of whom have featured solos.

The music is majestic. Proud, optimistic and spiritual, a mixture of jazz, modern classical and the most soulful of ethnic Spanish sounds and rhythms. With the exception of Klar's distracting electronic experiment using Ablanedo's voice mouthing part of his country's national anthem ("El Grito Sagrado"), all the music is by the leader.

Three of the most impressive compositions are over 10 minutes long. The striking, fanfare-led title track, the Spanish word for "Joy", is dedicated to Stravinsky and, despite its message of hope, would not sound out of place at a funeral.

The slowly moving "Procession" has pastoral overtones, with Sabbagh's soprano solo particularly poignant. Chris Cheek is equally effective on "Magic Spirit", "Naïve" and the flamenco-flavoured closing track, "And Like This He Goes", where Monder's self-effacing solo adds to the melancholy mood.

There's an impression by Haskins of what Miles might have brought to "Lux" and "Chorale" is a gorgeous extended work, featuring the understated, but important contribution by Jenny Scheinman.

You may not like all this music, but most of it is magnificent and will stand the test of time. Respect to Señor Jordi Pujol for giving the talented Ablanedo the necessary budget to do his work justice.

By Tony Hall