

All About Jazz

The Branford Marsalis Quartet: The Secret Between The Shadow And The Soul



By **DOUG COLLETTE**
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Anyone who's seen [the Branford Marsalis Quartet](#) in concert is well aware of what high-flying improvisations the group can embark upon. But the foursome's abandoned approach hardly precludes due emphasis on structure---how better to highlight it than leave it behind?—which is also why this band makes studio albums as trenchant as *The Secret Between the Shadow and the Soul*.



Yet the irony in this duality is that strong material is the foundation for concise, purposeful musicianship, whether within or without the confines of tunes, such as the bandleader's own "Life Filtering from the Water Flowers." The spirituous-mystical implications of its title (and that of the album itself) are in keeping with the unusual changes of the composition and, not surprisingly, the ingenious instrumental interplay proceeding from it. This musicianship is so striking in part because it's filtered through the Quartet's extended tenure together, the years of which have honed both their individual and collective instincts.

The progression from the floating opening horn tones to more playful intonations there is also fully in keeping with another number, bassist [Eric Revis](#)' "Dance of the Evil Toys," the gaiety in the very title resonating through the sound of pianist [Joey Calderazzo](#)'s instrument. Recorded in Melbourne, Australia in the midst of an international tour in the Spring of 2018, the ensemble's first pure quartet effort since *Four MFs Playin' Tunes* (Marsalis Music, 2012) contains spare uncluttered arrangements, rendered without extraneous notes or rhythmic fillips, produced by Branford himself, recorded and mixed by Rob "Wacko!" Hunter. Obviously performing at an extremely high-level at the time, it's to the foursome's credit they were wise enough to access the studio setting to capture their interactions both frenzied and delicate, as on "Nilaste."

The aforementioned tune from Revis, one of two here along with Calderazzo's pair of contributions, (covers of [Andrew Hill](#) and [Keith Jarrett](#) appear as well), sounds as if recording began in the middle of a dense jam. A conversation ensues among the four players, including drummer Jason Faulkner's distinct echoing of his percussion mate, during which all the players exchange ideas and embroider upon them during the course of the track. Based on decades of playing together, the simpatico is as keen and well-defined as the recording quality throughout; no one man or his instrument takes precedence over the others, but Calderazzo's piano is prominent by dint of its bright tone, a marked contrast to the somber air of that tune of his that follows, "Conversation Among the Ruins."

Serious in both concept and execution, *The Secret Between the Shadow and the Soul* concludes with the direct and deliberate communication at which the Branford Marsalis Quartet excels throughout the record. Yet this seventh cut, "The Windup," overflows with the joy of a complete and utter romp no doubt envisioned by its author, Keith Jarrett, the piano icon of *The Köln Concert* (ECM, 1975). It is revelatory in making explicit just how much pleasure this group shares by playing together.

Track Listing

Dance of the Evil Toys; Conversation Among the Ruins; Snake Hip Waltz; Cianna; Nilaste; Life Filtering from the Water Flowers; The Windup.

Personnel

Branford Marsalis: saxophone; Joey Calderazzo: piano; Eric Revis: bass; Justin Faulkner: drums.

Album Information

Title: [The Secret Between the Shadow and the Soul](#) | Year Released: 2019 | Record Label: [Okeh](#)