



## **Jazz Promo Services**

**Brad Myers**

**"Prime Numbers"**

**(Colloquy Records 1357)**

**Street Date: June 5, 2015**

**Brad Myers-guitar, Chris Barrick-vibraphone, Ben Walkenhauer-tenor sax, Peter Gemus-bass,  
Tom Buckley-drums & cymbals, Michael Mavridoglou-trumpet #5 & flugelhorn #8,  
Dominic Marino-trombone #5**

One of the most desired, but often elusive goals in jazz is to produce a distinctive group sound. The outstanding guitarist/composer Brad Myers and his exceptional ensemble achieve that perfectly on *Prime Numbers* (Colloquy Records), his debut CD as a leader. Part of that is due to the five plus years that Brad and these musicians – vibraphonist Chris Barrick, tenor saxophonist Ben Walkenhauer and the bass/drums tandem of Peter Gemus and Tom Buckley – have performed together in a variety of formats. But the major portion is due to the obvious joy they get from playing together within the context provided by Brad's remarkable compositions and the inspired arrangements.

The delightful blend of the tenor/guitar/vibes frontline offers a captivating sonic canvas to paint upon, and the beautiful soundscapes created here are most compelling. Aurally reminiscent of the beguiling sound of Grant Green's classic *Idle Moments*, the musicians perform here with that same combination of relaxed authority and adventurous lyricism, but fully in the current timeframe some fifty years later.

There is clearly a special connection between Myers and Barrick, as the guitar and vibes dance, feint, swirl, punch and counterpunch in a stunning pas de deux of harmonious interaction that produces a very effective atmosphere for creativity. Gemus and Buckley produce their own sparkling interplay that buoys and drives the ensemble. Together they create a cohesion and substance that is both riveting in its impact and highly stimulating for the solos of Myers, Barrick, and Walkenhauer. The tenorman's virile tone and spirited playing on both the written lines and improvisations blends perfectly with the overall sound of the ensemble and always adds a cogent element of excitement and urgency. As special guests, Michael Mavridoglou brings his trumpet and flugelhorn to two tracks and trombonist Dominic Marino joins in on one.

In the true spirit of the label name Colloquy, the music is definitely conversational, with dialogues, triologies and collective communion weaving together fascinating tales that are palpably visual and often cinematic.

The repertoire – six Myers originals, a pair from two of jazz' most noted composers and a terrific re-imagination of a classic standard – provides a sumptuous and scintillating context for imaginative exploration. Brilliant juxtapositions and transitions abound, keeping an element of surprise and invention constantly at play.

Myers' compositions are intricate, but never contrived; challenging, but totally accessible; and innovative, but consistently lyrical. He and his colleagues embrace the music with the virtuosity it demands for its proper exposition, but also with the exuberance and jubilation that makes it soar from beginning to end.

That *Idle Moments* feel is most notable on the opening track, *Bentley's Blues*, a bouncy jaunt built on nicely suspended vibes and guitar and a potent bass walk, with angular vibes, soulful tenor and sprightly guitar solos... a delightful appetizer for the upcoming feast.

There are a pair of Brazilian-tinged items. *Sunset in Curaçao* has a samba feel with its infectious melody offered in tenor/guitar unison dunked in shimmering vibes. Boldly striking solos transform what initially seems to be a languorous pastoral piece into an atmospheric and mysterious tale. *There Is Space for Us* flirts with a bossa color, adding Mavridoglou's flugelhorn to the mix, featuring his articulate and deeply melodic solo.

Myers' poignant balladry is on full display on his beautiful *You Are Here* with guitar and then guitar/tenor unison framed in the gossamer webbing of the vibes. At the other end of the emotional spectrum, the strikingly original *Spherical* is an audacious piece of constantly shifting tempos – accelerating, decelerating, burning, cooling, exploding and soaring in a spectacular display of ingenuity and excitement spiced with blazing solos of smoking vibes, blistering tenor and smoothly surging guitar, stoked by the impeccable rhythm section.

Nowhere is the conversational context of the album more apparent than on Brad's extended piece, the sensational *Rule of Threes*, a jubilant episodic sojourn with its opening richly textured theme played by trumpet, tenor and trombone bubbling over emphatic rhythms. Shifting into a funky ostinato bass driven groove and featuring powerful solos, it moves to a roaring, grooving climax powered by vibrant horn lines. Barrick's dynamic use of his special custom vibrato effect – used tastefully throughout the album with hypnotically stimulating results – is particularly opulent on this piece.

Thelonious Monk's *Evidence* and Wayne Shorter's *The Big Push* are impressively interpreted here, fully complementary to the album's conceptual thrust. The Monk classic is even more dramatically syncopated than usual – staggering and lurching forward upon the brisk percussive sizzle provided by Buckley (who suggested this exciting arrangement). Shorter's gem is a driving, neatly punctuated ride that features an appropriately muscular and impassioned solo by Walkenhauer. Barrick – whose longtime collaborative relationship with Myers is reflected throughout this album - provided the arrangement.

Barrick also provided the ingenious arrangement of Bronislau Kaper's classic *Invitation*, taking a most original approach of shifting rhythmic emphasis and striking syncopation, the enchanting composition is transformed in a totally refreshing manner. Highlighted by a vividly expressive guitar solo, the piece concludes with a splendid collective improv that closes out this extraordinary album on an exhilarating note of anticipation as to what may come next from the radiant ensemble and the formidable imagination of Brad Myers.

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