



## Leonardo Genovese

In less than a decade's time, Argentinian pianist Leonardo Genovese has already established a solid reputation as an instrumentalist and composer who is not afraid to explore the lesser known corners of the musical landscape. Genovese's new album, *Seeds* showcases his ability to move effortlessly between the melodic and the chromatic and celebrate the inherent mystery and beauty in each.

Born and raised in Venado Tuerto, Argentina, in 1979, Genovese discovered music through a variety of sources. At home, his mother played classical piano. In addition, he gravitated to the rock and pop – and later the blues and jazz – of his native country as well as the U.S.

He began playing piano when he was only five or six, although he admits that he didn't practice much and didn't really appreciate the range and versatility of the instrument until his teenage years. When he was 15, his older brother started playing the piano as well, and made his way into a series of rock bands. Suddenly, music had an energy and an appeal that Genovese hadn't recognized earlier.

At the University of Rosario in Argentina, Genovese pursued the unlikely dual track of music and accounting. It was then that he quickly realized how important music was to him. "The accounting only lasted for a few months," he says. "I remember calling my mother one morning and saying, 'Listen, I can't do this anymore. I'm sorry. I need to be playing the piano more seriously.'"

The creative awakening took him to Berklee College of Music in Boston in 2001. "Looking back on that period now, I don't know if I really had it clear in my mind yet exactly what I was doing or what I was about," he recalls. "Maybe it was an alien who took my hand and walked me through all that, and just led me there somehow. I woke up in this cold town, and everyone spoke in a language that I could barely understand for the first six months."

Despite the language and cultural barriers, he learned plenty at Berklee – under the tutelage of numerous high-caliber teachers, including Danilo Perez, Joanne Brackeen, Frank Carlberg and Ed Tomassi. He graduated in 2003 and immediately began performing and recording.

His first album was a small, independently released set called *Haikus II*, released in 2004. *Unlocked* followed in 2008. In hindsight, Genovese sees these two recordings as little

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more than quickly crafted snapshots of where he was on the artistic continuum at the time.

“I recorded each of them in maybe six hours,” he says. “Imagine taking a couple hours to set up, doing one take of each song, and then calling that a record. Maybe it was just a way to document where I was at the time.”

In between the two recordings, Genovese developed a collaborative relationship with Grammy winning bassist and vocalist Esperanza Spalding, a fellow Berklee alum. Since 2005, he has toured with Spalding throughout the U.S., South American, Europe, Asia, Africa and elsewhere. Spalding returns the favor by providing vocals on numerous tracks on *Seeds*. In addition, she also assists with the songwriting on “Portuguese Mirror” one of the most satisfying tracks in the 11-song set.

When he’s not touring with Spalding, Genovese – who is currently based in New York – also plays with a loosely assembled group called the Chromatic Gauchos, whose core membership includes Bob Gulloti, Dan Blake and John Lockwood. This threesome, along with Spalding and percussionist Sergio Miranda, appears prominently on *Seeds*.

While Genovese is still early on his career arc, he hopes that his music could eventually be more than just a source of entertainment, but also a force for change in a world that is troubled by economic, social and political challenges. “I would like it to go somewhere positive, somewhere helpful,” he says. “I would like for people to really gain something worthwhile from it. There are so many people around the world in need. Most of us never realize it, because most of us have the basic necessities and much more. But some people – many people – have very little.

He adds: “I want to make people more aware of the many different circumstances – and sometimes difficult circumstances – that other people face every day. A lot of it has to do with having the right intention. Music is a lot like people in that way. If it comes from a good place, it’s more likely to bear good fruit.”

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