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TROMBONIST MARSHALL GILKES GIVES ORCHESTRAL SHAPE TO SMALL GROUP JAZZ

* Third CD *Sound Stories* Features Donny McCaslin, Adam Birnbaum, Yasushi Nakamura & Eric Dobb *

*"Marshall Gilkes is the best trombonist to come into jazz in the new millennium."
— Stereophile Magazine*

Trombonist-composer **Marshall Gilkes** makes a major statement on *Sound Stories* (March 6, Alternate Side Records). Working with a sympathetic, immensely talented quintet featuring saxophonist Donny McCaslin, pianist Adam Birnbaum, bassist Yasushi Nakamura, and drummer Eric Doob, Gilkes takes his innovative composing and lyrical, hard-swinging soloing to new levels of excitement and refinement. DownBeat magazine has called Gilkes, "an important new voice in the making." On *Sound Stories*, he emerges as a distinctive composer of persuasive narrative power and a soloist with boundless melodic appeal.

"I like an orchestral shape in my music—with ups and downs—as opposed to a flat line where everything moves with the same intensity," says Gilkes. "I try to see the big picture when I write. Some of the pieces on the album have nine pages of music. They're through-composed, although I do allow a lot of freedom."

A strong thread connects the sections of each intricate composition. Even as tempos shift and time signatures change, the parts clearly relate to the whole. Gilkes conceived "Presence," "Anxiety," and "Armstrong" as two-part pieces where the sections fit together to form a complete unit. "On 'Presence,' there's a frantic first statement of the melody, which sets up Donny's solo," Gilkes explains. "The contrasting section for piano is through-composed, although Adam has lots of freedom to embellish the written melody and play with the chords. Part 2 begins with a variation on the first melody and ends with a recapitulation of the opening."

Gilkes likes improvisation and composition to form an organic whole. "I want each solo to support the written form," he says. "The solos should build, and set up the next part of the composition, to cue it in." Gilkes intensifies the beauty and intimacy of "Downtime" in his solo, building to a ravishing climax that signals the return of the lovely melody. The long, thematically coherent lines of his improvisation on "Slashes" contrast the short, fragmented phrases of the composition.

Closely integrating composition and improvisation demands special musicians, and Gilkes surrounds himself with players attuned to his ideas. Pianist Birnbaum and Gilkes display empathy and craftsmanship in their duet on "Bare." Bassist Nakamura and Gilkes tell superlative musical stories in the beginning of Gilkes' solo on "Anxiety Part 2," and the bassist's lyrical gifts are evident during his solo on "Downtime." McCaslin presents his fiery presence on "Presence," and "Armstrong" (named for Gilkes' late grandfather, not the legendary jazz trumpeter). The music was polished during the band's week long engagement at Dizzy's Club Coca Cola just prior to recording *Sound Stories*. They

navigate Gilkes' complex charts and compositional intent with grace and vitality while interjecting their voices into the music.

Gilkes was born in Camp Springs, Maryland, and spent his childhood in many different parts of the United States traveling with his father, a musician in the Air Force, and his mother, a singer. He began playing trombone at the age of ten and hasn't looked back.

A graduate of The Juilliard School as well as Interlochen Arts Academy, Gilkes was a 2003 finalist in the Thelonious Monk International Jazz Competition. He made his recording debut in 2004 with *Edenderry* of which JazzTimes wrote, "He sounds fine on the ballads, where he plays with the slightest hint of terminal vibrato, but his ripe tone and aggressive soloing on the faster numbers really stand out." Jazz Review called his 2008 quintet recording, *Lost Words*, "one of those rare releases that has so much good music on it the listener can be ensured of solid artistic sentiments and beautiful playing throughout its entire length."

He has performed at jazz festivals and venues throughout Europe, South America, Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean, and taught and presented master classes at institutions around the world including The Banff Center, Berklee College of Music, and on behalf of the Juilliard School. In addition to his work as a leader, he has performed or recorded with Richard Bona, Edmar Castaneda, Billy Cobham, Dave Douglas, the Maria Schneider Orchestra, and the Village Vanguard Orchestra. He is featured on Maria Schneider's Grammy Award winning CD *Sky Blue*, among many others, including CDs by John Fedchock, David Berger and Edmar Castaneda. After living and working in New York for twelve years, he moved to Cologne, Germany where he is a member of the WDR Big Band. He is an artist for Edwards Instruments.

"I'm trying to become a more refined player, to really hone my ideas as a composer and improviser so I can play exactly what I want," Gilkes says. "Sometimes I feel like I'm not very good with words, so I'm trying to play what I can't put into words."

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