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TRUMPETER/COMPOSER ITAMAR BOROCHOV ADVANCES A SEARINGLY PERSONAL MUSICAL LANGUAGE ON HIS GREENLEAF MUSIC DEBUT *ARBA*

Produced by Matt Pierson

Release Date: September 8, 2023

*Itamar Borochov (quarter-tone trumpet, voice, compositions), with:
Rob Clearfield (piano, organ, Rhodes), Rick Rosato (bass), Jay Sawyer (drums),
+ Avri Borochov (oud, track 3)*

New York-based trumpeter and composer **Itamar Borochov** is proud to present ***Arba*** (Hebrew: “four”), his fourth album as a leader and first for Dave Douglas’ prestigious Greenleaf Music label. While the quartet instrumentation mirrors that of his previous releases *Blue Nights* and *Boomerang*, *Arba* marks the first appearance of Borochov’s earthy, expressive singing voice in a featured role on several tracks. It is also the fullest documentation to date of Borochov’s use of a custom Monette quarter-tone trumpet with four valves.

Vocally and on the horn, Borochov infuses his compositions with phrasing, inflection and ornamentation drawn from his deep study of *maqamat*, the scale system and musical language of traditional music of the Middle East and North Africa. The sound also stems from music he absorbed growing up attending a Sephardic synagogue in his native Jaffa (near Tel Aviv). Joining him on this vibrant all-original outing are pianist **Rob Clearfield**, bassist **Rick Rosato** and drummer **Jay Sawyer**.

Borochov returned to Jaffa during the pandemic and laid the groundwork for an album that would “embrace elements that make up my own life path,” he writes in an album note. What we hear as a result, he continues, is “a musical language that originates from the stirring Middle Eastern sounds which have surrounded me since my childhood by the Mediterranean and traces my journey to the energy-infused streets of New York, studying the teachings of Barry Harris and exploring shared truths of oral traditions across boundaries of genre and nationality on the way.”

Arba marks Jay Sawyer's third appearance with Borochoy on record, and Rob Clearfield's second. "These guys have pure hearts," says the trumpeter. "We perceive music in a similar way, as a spiritual and emotional medium. What drives the music is a feeling, and Jay is an emotional player. Rob is well-versed in Western classical music, and the way he moves within a scale is more like a figured-bass type of thinking, which really works with the Middle Eastern modes in my music. Rob also has a strong blues and gospel background and that complements the music as well."

New quartet member **Rick Rosato**, a colleague from Borochoy's New School days, "brings something very special to the group," the leader says. "The bass is such a powerful center for any band, and that sometimes gets overlooked, but when you're playing you feel it so strongly. Rick is a phenomenal bassist and we're very good friends, so something really clicked. This is my first album not to feature my older brother Avri on bass, but I'm happy that I could include him playing out on 'Ya Sahbi,' so there's still that connection."

The lyrics of "Ya Sahbi" form a kind of one-line poem: "Take your glasses off, my friend, take your glasses off." It is the one song with lyrics on *Arba*. The intense 7/4 piece "Wabisabi" and the intimate, chamber-like "Who Shall Grant Me Flight" find Borochoy singing impassioned wordless melodies that convey what he calls "the steady radiance of a life force within." On the leadoff track "Abraham" his voice is layered and set in the background, creating an alluring texture at the suggestion of veteran producer **Matt Pierson**. "When I compose," Borochoy says, "most often I'm playing piano and singing at the same time. For me the first reference to a song is always me singing, and something can get lost when I transfer the melody to the horn. I felt that some of the melodies on *Arba* called for a voice and not a trumpet."

At the same time, Borochoy's searing lines make clear his investment in the hallowed trumpet lineage, from Louis Armstrong to Clark Terry, Miles Davis, Kenny Dorham, Lee Morgan and Booker Little through to Wynton Marsalis. (He cites the influence of Ben Webster for his assured yet wistful, warm and airy tone.) The charged interplay of the band, too, is born of the jazz tradition in all its richness and spontaneity. "Bayat Blues," rooted in the scale sonority known as *maqam bayat*, is a case in point, with a surprising shift to fierce double-time swing to launch Borochoy's solo.

Whatever a piece's technical features and demands, Borochoy thinks in terms of the song at the heart of it. "A song has no genre," he declares. "This is part of my intention: a song can be perceived in different ways, like a multi-dimensional holographic event. It could work as a traditional Middle Eastern song, a jazz tune, something more in a

singer-songwriter vein — I'm trying to write something you can view from all these angles, with the song at the center.”

In addition to his work in jazz, Borochoy is the featured soloist on composer Shanan Estreicher's *All You Shining Stars* (2023) for improvising quarter-tone trumpet and string ensemble. He also composed the seven-movement *Emergence Suite* for this configuration, premiering the work in Bryan, Texas in 2021. He was a co-founder, arranger and co-producer of Yemen Blues, appearing on four albums with the acclaimed world music group. He has toured across four continents, playing at many international festivals and in top venues including Lincoln Center, The Kennedy Center, SummerStage at Central Park, Blue Note NY, Ronnie Scott's and Bimhuis.

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