



**CARLOS
HENRIQUEZ**
THE BRONX
PYRAMID



T

he word “pyramid” conjures images of massive ancient structures emerging from the Egyptian desert, of mausoleums for pharaohs. In fact, pyramids are ubiquitous in human culture: they also appeared in Europe, Central America, and Asia long before making their way onto the one dollar bill. In all places, the pyramid symbolizes coming together; it embodies the raising of human consciousness on our physical plane. As you climb any of a pyramid’s sides, you move toward the same apex. When listening to “The Bronx Pyramid,” Carlos Henriquez’s debut album as a leader, you hear a sound that is shaped by different faces – different names – but remains balanced. It arrives at one synchronous point.

To understand Carlos’s Bronx Pyramid, you must understand its foundation. Carlos grew up on 146th Street and Brook Avenue in the South Bronx. His mother was a dancer for Chucho Avellanet and his father played trombone all through college before going off to fight in the Vietnam War. Growing

up around these artistic influences, it’s no surprise that Carlos found the bass and that his older brother Jose became a professional mambo dancer. The South Bronx has been home to a large and vibrant Puerto Rican population since the early 20th century, and the streets where Carlos grew up were filled by the sounds of people defining themselves in exile.

These sounds were not always so sweet. Carlos’s mother Nilda, concerned for his safety, attended Pentecostal church with her son, making sure he sat by the band. He took to the music quickly. Carlos made friends with the church’s bassist Tony Carasquillo and followed the elder musician around, listening to whatever he had to say about Latin American music. Carlos’s father Jorge knew which public schools had strong music programs because he worked as a custodian in many of them. Carlos went from elementary school at P.S. 30 to middle school at I.S. 139, where he met Adonis Puertas, the classical guitarist who would have the strongest influence on the young musician’s career. Puertas would introduce

Carlos to Juilliard's Music Advancement Program, a weekend program for talented youth. While in the program, he was featured in an episode of CBS's "60 Minutes" playing classical guitar and had his first introduction to Wynton Marsalis. Although these were pivotal moments in his musical journey, it was another path that opened up for him during these middle school years that helped develop the base of Carlos's pyramid.

Attending I.S. 139 allowed Carlos access to an after-school program called the South Bronx Community Action Theatre. While in this program, Carlos was convinced to take up the bass by band teacher Connie Grossman. Although he was hesitant at first, it became crystal-clear to Carlos after Grossman introduced him to Latin jazz giants Víctor Venegas and Joe Santiago that studying this instrument would open up enormous possibilities for his musical career. After "after school," Carlos would listen to Venegas wax poetically about Cal Tjader and Paul Chambers. *After* after "after school," he would go out to the music clubs with Santiago and

hang with legends such as Carlos (Patato) Valdés, Graciela, Mario Bauzá, Larry Harlow, and Tito Puente. From middle school on, Carlos's days were filled with formal music lessons while at night he learned the myths of the musicians; that sacred knowledge that transformed him from a young aspirant into a hungry prodigy.

Carlos went on to study classical and jazz bass at the famed LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts. Other celebrated jazz musicians including Bill Charlap, Marcus Miller, and Billy Cobham had also gone to LaGuardia. At this same time, he was fortunate enough to have bandleader Andy González in his life. Andy opened up a whole new world and broadened the young bassist's musical horizons. Throughout high school, Carlos went to recording sessions with González, where he would watch musicians like Michael Brecker, Don Alias, and Tito Puente in action. Carlos sat on stage with González in Manny Oquendo's Orquesta Libre, and if the concerts were too late at night or in a seedy club, his mother Nilda would be by his side. When





Nilda could not watch him, Carlos would go out with his older brother Jose to mambo clubs around New York City. As older musicians started to see this young kid in these late night haunts, they began to invite him to play. First was Marco Rizo, who had served as the musical director on “I Love Lucy;” then Tito Nieves, then Conjunto Clasico, and by 15 years old he was playing at the famous Wolf Trap National Park for the Performing Arts with Eddie Palmieri.

By the time Carlos turned 17, he had studied bomba, rumba, salsa, mambo, classical, jazz, and everything in between – the New York circuit introduced him to music from all over the Western world. Carlos brought these well-honed skills to LaGuardia’s jazz band, which won Jazz at Lincoln Center’s inaugural Essentially Ellington competition for high school ensembles in 1996. By the time Wynton Marsalis called on him to fill the bass chair with the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra in 1997, he was already a worldly, professional musician, and he hadn’t even graduated from high school yet. Although he would spend a majority of the

next 20 years as the bassist for Downbeat’s 2013 and 2014 Big Band of the Year, Mr. Henriquez has also led his own small group around the world, played with Chris Botti, and featured for the Danilo Pérez and Gonzalo Rubalcaba trios.

When Carlos was asked why he had not recorded an album earlier in his career, his answer was simple: “I was not ready.” “The Bronx Pyramid” is the culmination of Carlos’s journey – each stone has been meticulously crafted. On “Brook Ave,” you can hear the sounds of the South Bronx in the early 90s; turn the corner and you are in a “Cuchifrito” spot, eating Puerto Rican and Dominican food dripping with grease as sounds from the Caribbean fill your ears. Listen to “Nilda” and you are in the sweet embrace of a mother, somewhere in the inner chambers of love. This album has many faces, but if you listen close enough you will find that they all come together to make the same point. ▲

1. The Bronx Pyramid (6:36)

Carlos Henriquez/Big Papi (ASCAP)
Composed and Arranged by
Carlos Henriquez
Pedrito Martínez (Batas), Michael
Rodríguez (Trumpet), Robert
Rodríguez (Piano), Carlos Henriquez
(Bass), Ali Jackson (Drums)

This tune uses a West African groove and is a reflection of the perimeters of my childhood. The boundaries were from 138th street in the south to 146th street on Brook Avenue, then further northwest to Yankee Stadium. It also reflects the amount of people that helped build my career and those who taught me my craft.

2. Cuchifrito (7:33)

Carlos Henriquez/Big Papi (ASCAP)
Composed and Arranged by
Carlos Henriquez
Michael Rodríguez (Trumpet),
Felipe Lamoglia (Tenor Saxophone),
Robert Rodríguez (Piano), Carlos
Henriquez (Bass), Ali Jackson
(Drums), Bobby Allende (Congas)

I wrote this tune in remembrance of my times eating delicious Puerto Rican or Dominican food in the Bronx.

Sometimes there are two “cuchifritos” spots in a one-block radius. One other great thing about these places is that if you are there at the right time of night, you’ll always bump into great musicians after their gigs.

3. Descarga Entre Amigos (5:18)

Carlos Henriquez/Big Papi (ASCAP)
Composed by Carlos Henriquez,
Lyrics by Rubén Blades
Arranged by Carlos Henriquez,
Ruben Blades, Bobby Allende and
Robert Rodríguez
Ruben Blades (vocals), Michael
Rodríguez (Trumpet), Felipe
Lamoglia (Tenor Saxophone), Robert
Rodríguez (Piano), Carlos Henriquez
(Bass), Ali Jackson (Drums), Bobby
Allende (Congas and Coro), Renzo
Padilla (Coro), Kike Gonzalez(Coro)

This song was recorded from an improvised jam session we had with Rubén Blades; we put it together in five minutes. It’s very much in the tradition of the “descarga” tradition as performed by both the Alegre All-Stars and Cachao. This tune had “un masacote tremendo” and is about how much fun collaboration can be.

4. Joshua’s Dream (7:17)

Carlos Henriquez/Big Papi (ASCAP)
Composed and Arranged by
Carlos Henriquez
Felipe Lamoglia (Tenor Saxophone),
Robert Rodríguez (Piano), Carlos
Henriquez (Bass), Ali Jackson
(Drums), Bobby Allende (Congas)

This tune uses a bolero rhythm. I wrote it for my third child, Joshua. He came at a time when I was trying so hard to find myself. With him next to me, I figured out my purpose in life.

5. Guarajazz (5:43)

Carlos Henriquez/Big Papi (ASCAP)
Composed and Arranged by
Carlos Henriquez
Michael Rodríguez (Trumpet), Felipe
Lamoglia (Tenor Saxophone),
Robert Rodríguez (Piano), Carlos
Henriquez (Bass), Ali Jackson
(Drums)

“Guarajazz” is a combination of a guaracha groove and a swing groove. I interchange these grooves in the tune, adding parts of a son groove. This tune is actually based on a concept of Wynton Marsalis’s “Black Codes From the Underground.”





6. Promesas (6:29)

Carlos Henriquez/Big Papi (ASCAP)
Composed and Arranged
by Carlos Henriquez
Michael Rodríguez (Trumpet), Felipe
Lamoglia (Tenor Saxophone), Robert
Rodríguez (Piano), Carlos Henriquez
(Bass), Ali Jackson (Drums), Bobby
Allende (Congas)

*This song uses a guaguanco groove,
like "Brook Ave." I was thinking about
promises that I've made when I wrote
it, as well as all of the decisions that a
man has to make in life. Promises are a
powerful form of magic.*

7. 9 O'Clock Bomba (5:35)

Carlos Henriquez/Big Papi (ASCAP)
Composed and Arranged
by Carlos Henriquez
Michael Rodríguez (Trumpet),
Felipe Lamoglia (Tenor Saxophone),
Robert Rodríguez (Piano), Carlos
Henriquez (Bass), Ali Jackson
(Drums), Bobby Allende (Congas)

*This tune is written to reflect the things
that happen after 9am and 9pm. In the
summer time, it marks the beginning
of the late morning and the early*

*night. The song also uses a lot of minor
9 chords and makes use of modern
bomba and swing rhythms.*

8. Al Fin Te Vi (3:09)

Carlos Henriquez/Big Papi (ASCAP)
Composed by Ernesto Lecuona
Michael Rodríguez (Trumpet),
Carlos Henriquez (Bass)

*This song was composed by Ernesto Lec-
uona. This duet is a tribute to the famous
duet of Paquito D'Rivera and Cachao.*

9. Nilda (6:34)

Carlos Henriquez/Big Papi (ASCAP)
Composed and Arranged by
Carlos Henriquez
Michael Rodríguez (Trumpet),
Felipe Lamoglia (Tenor Saxophone),
Robert Rodríguez (Piano), Carlos
Henriquez (Bass), Ali Jackson
(Drums)

*This is a ballad written for my mom.
She is the reason I'm here and the rea-
son why I'm a musician. She dedicated
her life to making my dreams come
true. This tune has an airy melody
that doesn't resolve at the end because
I knew that after her death she would
always be near, continuing to love and
support me.*

10. Brook Ave (5:30)

Carlos Henriquez/Big Papi (ASCAP)
Composed and Arranged by
Carlos Henriquez
Michael Rodríguez (Trumpet), Felipe
Lamoglia (Tenor Saxophone), Robert
Rodríguez (Piano), Carlos Henriquez
(Bass), Ali Jackson (Drums), Bobby
Allende (Congas)

*I wrote this tune based on my experi-
ence living on Brook Avenue in the
80s and 90s. I saw so much on this
avenue and I learned so much too. The
streets burst with guaguanco and I
just tried to capture the feeling I used
to know.*

Thank You

My Parents – Jorge and Nilda Henriquez, Brother – Jose Henriquez, Wife – Sara Henriquez, Sons – Carlos Jr., Alex and Joshua Henriquez

My Band – Michael Rodriguez, Robert Rodriguez, Felipe Lamoglia, Ali Jackson and Bobby Allende
P.S. 30, Carmen Hernandez, I.S. 139, South Bronx Community Action Theatre, Fred Darris, Adonis Puertas, Victor Venegas, Connie Grossman, Juan Pagan, Tony Carasquillo, Templo Renovacion, M.A.P, Juilliard, Bob Stewart, Justin DiCoccio , Dante R, Dennis Bell, John Schaffer, Jeff Bollbach, Tio Carlos, Titi Millie, Willie Torres, Danny Mendez, Victor Cruz, Tito Nieves, Ruben Rodriguez, Marc Quiñones, Isidro Infante, Nelson Hernandez, SkyLight Studios, David Conde, Bobby Sanabria, Eddie Palmieri, Sal Cuevas, Johnny Pacheco, Celia Cruz, La India, Johnny Torres, Salvador, Wayne Gorbea, Andy Gonzalez, Manny Oquendo, Steven Oquendo, Dave Valentin, Ignacio Berroa, Tito Puente, Jose Madera, Johnny Rodriguez, Joe Santiago, Bobby Rodriguez, Pedro Perez, Efrain Hernandez, Nelson Gonzalez, Rene Lopez, Charlie Sepulveda, Danilo Perez, John Patitucci, Marcus Miller, Gonzalo Rubalcaba, Charlie Haden, Christian McBride, Steve Turre, Grammy's in the Schools, David Sears, Gaby Armand, Wynton Marsalis, Chris Botti, Bobby Colomby, Antonio Sanchez, Fort Apache Band, Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, Edger Meyer, Jimmy Delgado.

Special Guests:

Rubén Blades – Vocals on “Descarga Entre Amigos”
Pedrito Martínez – Batas on “The Bronx Pyramid”
Renzo Padilla – Coro on “Descarga Entre Amigos”
Kike Gonzalez – Coro on “Descarga Entre Amigos”

Executive Producer: Wynton Marsalis

Produced by Carlos Henriquez
Engineered by Rob Macomber
Mixed by Rob Macomber
Mastered by Mark Wilder at Battery Studios, NYC 2015

Art Direction and Design: Jeff Hunt

Photography: Lawrence Sumulong, Frank Stewart and Ernest Gregory
Liner Notes: Simeon Marsalis and Carlos Henriquez
Project Manager: Valerie Florville

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