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Alexa Tarantino “Firefly” - artist notes

Spider’s Dance - Art Hirahara generously contributed this composition to this record with inspiration from my last name. He researched “Tarantino” and came to understand the origins of the name, the Italian people, and certain customs in their culture. “Tarantula” is, of course, a word similar to Tarantino. “Spider’s Dance” refers to the mating dance of the Peacock spider.

Mindful Moments - Behn Gillece crafted this reflective piece to feature alto flute. The harmony takes an unexpected journey and provides so much color. When I hear this piece, I picture a still body of water, which is what inspired me to keep the melody somewhat still and unornamented as the harmony and instrumentation provided movement underneath the melody.

Move of the Spirit - Rudy Royston is one of the most fun and energetic people I know! No surprise that his composition, Move of the Spirit, carries that same energy. We had a blast recording this — I hope it makes you feel like dancing!

Iris - This is one of my favorite Wayne Shorter performances ever. I love how haunting and sincere the melody is. Wayne is one of my favorite saxophonists and it was incredibly cathartic to play this with a live band after several months of isolation.

Here’s where **A Moment in Time**, my original suite (along with interjections from Boris Kozlov and Wayne Shorter), begins. It is a sound painting depicting the journey in an artist’s mind, specifically during quarantine. It’s a raw and personal snapshot of a day in a creative’s life, and the responsibilities that come with this lifestyle which, to most of society, appears ethereal, idyllic, novel, and curious. Today’s fast-paced world of technology and instant gratification has centered the human priority on money, material items, flashy success, and social media following. Essentially, it’s “How can I get, produce, or be *the next best thing, right now?*” While we’ve seen how this has skyrocketed us forward in the realms of technology and science, it has undoubtedly impacted human thought, attention, and connection, forever.

Daybreak - Daybreak is “morning” in the artist’s world. It’s that “clean slate” feeling of having the whole day ahead of you, a feeling of calm and peace before the inspiration strikes. A gentle entry into your work and your flow, with endless possibilities. It’s your happy place.

Surge Fughetta - This is a wonderful introduction to my piece, “Surge Capacity”, composed by Boris Kozlov. He wrote this fugue for alto flute, vibraphone, and bass, highlighting some of my compositional themes in the suite. Incredible and completely different from anything else on the album.

Surge Capacity - The song portrays that moment when the inspiration strikes, or the work begins (because let's be honest - the inspiration may not always appear). It's the wave that you ride as ideas wash over you and you rush to capture them onto the page. Time has stopped, the world has paused, and your sole responsibility is to harness this current of energy for creation.

La Donna Nel Giardino - The Lady in the Garden is the spirit of play within all of us. She is the free spirit that doesn't conform to societal norms or expectations. She lives life on her own terms. She has the self-awareness and self-determination to put aside and decline what does not fulfill her, and make a full life out of what does. The Lady in the Garden has her own definition of success, life, and play.

Rootless Ruthlessness - On the flip side, Rootless Ruthlessness is the self-doubt, self-criticism, uncertainty, anxiety, and comparison that arises as the artist analyzes what they have created and imagines how the work will compare or be received out in the world. The artist themselves is their biggest critic. Rootless Ruthlessness is the fight to overcome criticism, abandon fear, and give life to the art by releasing it from one's grasp and allowing it to breathe, live, and hopefully fly.

Lady Day - Another Wayne Shorter favorite, and another magical moment playing with a full band in the studio! It's not a part of the suite, A Moment in Time, but provides a great moment for thought and perspective.

Violet Sky - The violet sky is the period of time where the artist recharges for the next surge of inspiration or creativity. We are now back in our happy place. This movement represents "evening" in the cycle of a day. As I composed the piece, I imagined the changing hues of a slow sunset over the ocean.

The Firefly Code - How does an artist (or anyone, for that matter) maintain that spark of light inside them and believe that their voice and their work is valuable? And, most importantly for all of us in this moment, how do we keep that spark of light flickering amidst a global pandemic full of isolation and loss? You don't have to be an artist to empathize with this sentiment. 2020 brought each of us unpredictable loss and grief in different ways. Our individual lights perhaps are not shining as bright as they were a year ago. But the bottom line is that we shine brighter together than we do apart. We, especially artists and creatives, are resilient. My hope is that after a time of "darkness", we as a society will re-emerge brighter than ever - with a renewed appreciation for the little things - an extended embrace with someone we love, the sound of the birds chirping while sipping our morning latte, or the way that staring at a painting, listening to a composition, or reading a poem makes us pause, think, and feel...in a way that no amount of Instagram likes or followers ever could. As you forge ahead through this unprecedented time, promise to hold onto your spark of light. To paraphrase Chinese philosopher Confucius - "It does not matter how slowly you go [*or flicker*] so long as you do not stop." The song, The Firefly Code, embodies just that, with undertones of hope, faith, rest, and rejuvenation, to emerge shining brighter and stronger on the other side.