



Chiemi Nakai-Pianist/Composer/Arranger

A native of Japan, she began classic training early and moved in the direction of Jazz, Afro-Cuban music and Salsa. While residing in Osaka, Japan, she started performing Jazz, Brazilian music and Salsa. Her talents were recognized early by some heavy hitter such as **Albert "Tootie" Heath** in 1992.

In 1993, she began to play in "Mamborama", which is the most professional Latin Jazz & Salsa group in Osaka, leaded by **Yoshi Yamada**(b) and joined its recording work in 1997("Japonismo").

Also played with **Chie Ayado**(vo), **Rikiya Higashikawa**(ds), **Carlos Kanno**(perc., vo), **Gen Ogimi**(perc.) who is an ex-leader of **Orquesta de la Luz**,etc. She came to NYC in 1998 to expand her music career.

In 2000, entered Aaron Copland School of Music/Queens College to study big band jazz arrangement under **Michael Phillip Mossman**(tp), and also took lesson under **Sir Roland Hanna**(p). She graduated Queens College/M.A. Jazz Performance in 2002.

In 2002, she joined **Jimmy Bosch**(tb) band and traveled to Europe and played with **New York All Stars Band** in which joined **Giovanni Hidalgo**(congas), **Dave Valentin**(fl), **Jose Alberto "El Canario"** (vo) and **Alfredo de la Fe**(violin). From 2003 to 2004, she played with "**Omi Odara**" and **Juan Carlos Formell**(b), "The Cuban Mission" which collaborates Juan in compositions with Afro-Cuban folk.

In 2006, she performed at Weill Recital Hall in Carnegie Hall with **Carlos del Pino**(b) Cuban project which connected with Cuban traditional music and contemporary music. She currently plays with **Los Mas Valientes**(Latin Jazz), **Ye-ra son**(Charanga), **Mario Rodriguez**(b) group(Latin Pop) and so on. And also she performs **Chiemi Nakai & her Afro- Cuban Jazz Project** at several clubs in NYC such as Blue Note, Europe Club, Willie's steak house, etc. Her new album "**bridges**" released in January 2008.



CHIEMI NAKAI-EMMANUEL BIZEAU & AFRO-CUBAN JAZZ PROJECT

New York City based Jazz pianist/ composer **Chiemi Nakai** and Latin percussionist/ arranger **Emmanuel "Manu" Bizeau** join musical forces to form the Chiemi Nakai & Emmanuel Bizeau Afro Cuban Jazz Project. Known for her ability to move "effortlessly from classical compositions to jazz changes to marvelous montunos that would fire up any mambo band," Tottori, Japan native Chiemi Nakai has made a name for herself playing alongside and recording with some of the most well known artists in Latin Jazz. Emmanuel Bizeau has an equally impressive career which has taken him from his homeland of France, where he was a fixture in the local Latin Jazz scene, to Cuba, where he honed his musical skills under the tutelage of acknowledged masters of Afro-Cuban music to the U.S., where he continues to expand his career. Together with bassist **Jorge Bringas** and drummer **Ludwig Afonso** these incredibly talented artists release their debut CD "**bridges**" a "surprisingly powerful and fresh look at Latin Jazz."

This 9-track collection is comprised of eight original compositions by Nakai and a cover of the Latin standard *Obsesión* by influential Puerto Rican orchestra leader and composer **Pedro Flores**. With bridges Nakai and Bizeau bring freshness and excitement, combining musical virtuosity with imagination and emotion reflecting their diverse musical and cultural influences. In addition to her bebop jazz and Cuban music training, Nakai cites Japanese culture and melodies as a major influence on her work, "my friends tell me that my songs sound like Japanese melodies" says Nakai. For Bizeau it was Cuban music, which he discovered as a teenager. "I bought my first conga when I was 17 after listening to some salsa records. When I went to Cuba, it was a revolution for me."

Many of the songs on bridges were inspired by very personal events in group leader Chiemi Nakai's life. "With Manu and me not being Latin we find ourselves playing to a primarily Latin audience but at the same time being shut out of the Latin world. In "*La Frontera*" ("*The Boundary*") I try to come to grips with why despite the boundaries that we face we are still so attracted Latin music and all that it represents. Naming the album "bridges" I believe is the best answer that I can come up with. It expresses the hope that our music becomes a bridge that unites us all; France, Japan, the Latin world and all humanity."

"Azul" ("Blue") has a special place in my heart because it has been with me the longest. It was one of the first songs that I wrote and at the time I didn't really like the color blue. Ten years later, in 2004 I decided to rewrite the song adding different musical elements and techniques that I had learned over time. When I finished, I realized how much I had grown musically. And now, the color blue has a different meaning to me - it represents clarity, transparency, something spiritual. Now I love color blue and see my personal goals becoming clearer to me."

In the simple yet playful "Flying Gray Cat", Nakai tells of an adventure with her cat Pipi, who like all cats can sometimes be too curious for his own good. "Late one evening my cat Pipi was playing by the window in my second floor apartment while I was taking a shower. Suddenly a friend who was visiting at the time called out "hey Chiemi, I think Pipi just went out the window." Frantic, I jumped out of the shower, threw on some clothes and dashed down the stairs to see if Pipi was OK. When I got downstairs it was freezing cold and I had to crawl through a tiny window that led to the outdoor garden where Pipi had landed. I eventually caught a cold from being outside in the cold all wet, but thank goodness Pipi had survived the fall with nothing more than a little red scar on his nose. I don't know what I would have done without him." She expands on this sentiment in "Fragments of Sadness", a song she wrote after witnessing a neighborhood stray being run over by a speeding car. "This is my requiem to all the creatures who were taken away from us due to human recklessness."

"Más y Más" ("More and More") is a tune in which Nakai expresses her hunger for "more and more" recounting the time when she first moved to New York. "1999 was a very difficult year for me. I didn't speak English well and I was trying to enter The Aaron Copland School of Music at Queens College. After two unsuccessful attempts at trying to pass the English proficiency exam required for entrance my savings were gradually depleting and because of my status as student I didn't have a job. At the same time I was trying to keep the momentum going in my career. I was alone, on my way to being broke and very discouraged. I wanted more... I needed more."

"The Moon on the Water" features lyrics and vocals by **Mari Koga** and the soulful bass of **Noriko Ueda**, both fellow ex-pats. Nakai says of the song "I wrote the music to this song back in 1992 while I was still in Japan. The original title of the song was "Funa Uta" or "The Boat Song" in English. At that time I had imagined boating on a small river in the springtime in Japan, but had not written any lyrics. When Manu and I decided to include the song on the album I felt that it needed lyrics to express that image and asked **Mari**, a close friend and aspiring jazz singer, if she wanted to write them. She came to me the following day and I was totally blown away. Instead of just a ballad for

lovers, her lyrics elevated the song to a higher level, expressing universal themes to which everyone could relate; meditation, reflection, spirituality and finding one's path in difficult times."

Other highlights include "Nueva Visión 2" - homage to the late Cuban pianist **Emiliano Salvador** who Nakai sites as a major influence - and "Sedona" - in which Nakai envisions herself as an eagle soaring high over the sacred and picturesque terrain of some of American's first inhabitants.

A collaborative effort, bridges also features guest performances by conguero **Richie Flores**, trombonist **Jimmy Bosch**, bassists **Juan Carlos Formell** and **Carlos del Pino**, Flautist **Roberto Pitre** and many others.



Emmanuel "Manu" Bizeau/ Percussionist

A native of France, Paris, Emmanuel began studying Latin percussion at the age of 17. Seeking advanced instruction, he spent total three years in Cuba studying under many of the master Cuban percussionists of the time, including **Miguel Valdez Aballi of the Emiliano Salvador Group, Conrado "Coqui" Garcia, Jose Luis "Changuito" Quintana, Roberto "Guayacan" Hernandez of Los Van Van, Tomas "Panga" Ramos of Cubanismo, Alberto Villareal** who is a musical director of **Conjunto Folclorico Nacional de Cuba**, and among others. Upon returning to France, he made a name for himself performing and recording

with major player of the Latin music scene in Paris, including **Zumbadera, Marseille Caracas, Ilyenkori** and host of others.

Now based in New York City, Emmanuel is a well established player in the city's Latin music scene.

In 2004, he received a professional endorsement from the world market leader in percussion instrument manufacturing, LP(Latin Percussion).

In 2006, he joined with the project of **Carlos del Pino(b)** and performed at Weill Recital Hall of Carnegie Hall with the music which collaborates with Cuban contemporary music composer **Miss Tania Leon**.

Since 2002, he has collaborated with "**Chiemi Nakai(p) and the Afro-Cuban Jazz Project**" and played at several clubs in NYC such as Blue Note, The Kitano, Willie's Steak House, Nuyorican Poet's Cafe, and so on. On March, 2008, the project released the first CD called "bridges" and finally was nominated as one of "Next Generation Artist" CDs of the Latin Jazz Corner Best Latin Jazz of 2008 Award. And also himself was nominated as one of Best Percussionist of the year in the same Award.

Moreover, the CD "bridges" was selected as one of Top 6 Latin Jazz CDs in Diskunion/Union Award 2008.

Credits:

1. Los textos y la foto son cortesia de Chiemi Nakai para klavelatina 2010, para mayor informacion puede vistar su website: www.chieminakai.com y/o email: chiemi@chieminakai.com

2. Recopila Klave Latina Team (info@klavelatina.com)

