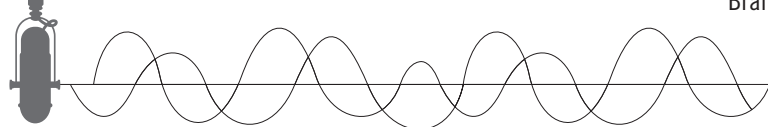


SONS OF SOUND®



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Spirit Songs

ANTHONY BRANKER & ASCENT

ANTONIO HART RALPH PETERSON RALPH BOWEN JONNY KING JOHN BENITEZ CLIFFORD ADAMS

New York, NY – Sons of Sound proudly announces the January 17, 2006 release of *Spirit Songs*, a collection of eight new works from composer **Anthony Branker**, performed by his ensemble **Ascent**, with alto and soprano saxophonist **Antonio Hart**, tenor and soprano saxophonist **Ralph Bowen**, trombonist **Clifford Adams, Jr.**, pianist **Jonny King**, bassist **John Benitez**, and drummer **Ralph Peterson, Jr.** The eight original works center on the themes of spirituality, faith, and inspiration.

As a composer, **Anthony Branker** has received composition prizes, commissions, served as a composer-in-residence, and has had his music featured in performance in Russia, France, Finland, Germany, Japan, Lithuania, New York's Symphony Space, and at ASCAP's Jazz Songwriters Showcase at the Fez under the Time Café. His works have been performed and/or recorded by Stanley Jordan, Steve Nelson, Bryan Carrott, Curtis Lundy, Mark Gross, the Spirit of Life Ensemble, and have featured such soloists as Kenny Barron, Eddie Henderson, John Hicks, Cecil Brooks III, and Sarah Jane Cion.

The CD *Spirit Songs* includes a collection of infectious compositions that reflect Branker's interest in culturally diverse musical styles and modal jazz harmony. Displaying a unique sense of lyricism and fondness for rhythmic groove, Branker brings together the distinctive sensibilities of Brazilian, Cuban, African, and Jamaican music with a variety of jazz influences. Featuring performances by some of the most gifted jazz artists working today, *Spirit Songs* will uplift and touch the soul of every listener. Selections include "Chant For Peace Eternal," "Parris in April" written for Branker's daughter, "Spirit Song," "Sketches of Selim" composed in honor of Miles Davis, "Imani (Faith)," "In God's Hands," "Mentor," and "J.C.'s Passion" composed in honor of John Coltrane. Two of these works ("Spirit Song" and "J.C.'s Passion") were completed as part of a commission that Branker received from The Commission Project in 2004.

As a trumpeter, Branker has performed and recorded with the Spirit of Life Ensemble, including a five-year residency at New York's internationally renowned Sweet Basil jazz club. He has served as assistant musical director and composer for the group and was featured on four of their CD releases. He has also performed at a variety of festivals, concert halls and clubs in the United States and throughout Europe. He has worked in a number of musical settings with such artists as Ted Curson, Guilherme Franco, Eddie Henderson, Rick Margitza, Gary Burton, Stanley Jordan, Benny Carter, Terence Blanchard, Roscoe Mitchell, the R&B group *Tavares*, and has performed in the critically acclaimed Off-Broadway production of *Dinah Was: The Dinah Washington Musical*.

Currently, Branker is a music professor and head of the jazz program at Princeton University in addition to being a member of the jazz faculty at the Manhattan School of Music. He has also served as professor of Music, Director of Jazz Studies, and Director of Performance Studies at Hunter College and the City University of New York and as Chairperson of the Department of Music at Ursinus College, where he was a member of the faculty for ten years. Branker holds a Master of Music in Jazz Pedagogy from the University of Miami as well as a Bachelor of Arts in Music and a Certificate in African-American Studies from Princeton University.

Upon graduating from the Berklee School of Music, soprano saxophonist **Antonio Hart** toured with classmate Roy Hargrove and earned a masters degree in performance and composition at Queens College under Jimmy Heath.

Tenor and soprano saxophonist **Ralph Bowen** recorded four records for Blue Note as co-leader of Out of the Blue - OTB and has toured and recorded with Horace Silver, Michel Camilo, Renee Rosnes, Hank Jones, Orrin Evans, Jim Beard, Shirley Scott, and Benny Carter.

Trombonist **Clifford Adams, Jr.** started touring with Patti Labelle and the Bluebells in 1968 at the age of 17. Returning to study music theory at Trenton State College, Clifford cut his teeth at the Fantasy Lounge where he played with Sonny Stitt, James Moody, George Benson, Shirley Scott, Gene Ammons, Don Patterson, and Charles Earland. By 1973 he joined the horn section for The Stylistics, and went on to perform with the Thad Jones and Mel Lewis Big Band, Duke Ellington's Orchestra under Mercer Ellington, and Max Roach before enjoying multi-platinum success as a member of Kool & the Gang.

Described by Thomas Conrad in *DownBeat* as "one of the strongest piano voices of the new generation," pianist **Jonny King** has toured as a member of Joshua Redman's Quartet and performed with the Blue Note Records cooperative band, OTB. He has also worked with Christian McBride, Ralph Moore, Bobby Watson, Kenny Garrett, David Sanchez and Joe Lovano, Roy Hargrove, Tom Harrell, Eddie Harris.

Currently on tour with guitarist John Scofield playing the music of Ray Charles, bassist **John Benitez** attended San Juan's performing arts high school, "Escuela Libre de Musica," the University of Puerto Rico and the Conservatory of Music. He has played with the legendary Fania All-Stars, Roberto Roena and his Apollo Sound and the experimental Afro-Rican band

band Batacumbele. Since moving to New York in 1993, Benitez has been featured with Willie Colon, Tito Puente, Eddie Palmieri, Wynton Marsalis, Roberto Carcassés, Mongo Santamaría, Conrad Herwig, Arturo O’Farrill, Ray Vega, the Mingus Big Band, Roy Hargrove, and David Sánchez.

A drummer’s drummer, **Ralph Peterson, Jr.** was hand-picked by Art Blakey for the master’s two-drummer big band in 1983, and by Elvin Jones to substitute for a week of his Jazz Machine gigs at The Blue Note in New York in 2000. He has also recorded and toured with Terence Blanchard, Branford Marsalis, Stanley Turrentine, David Murray, The Count Basie Orchestra, Betty Carter and Michael Brecker.

Along with the CD release of *Spirit Songs*, Sons of Sound has opened the vaults to make more of Mr. Branker’s work available for the first time in over 20 years. *For The Children* is a 1980 recording of Mr. Branker’s compositions that also features the earliest known recorded performances of guitarist **Stanley Jordan**, who attended Princeton along with Mr. Branker. *For The Children* will initially be available only in digital format though the iTunes Music Store.

Sons of Sound is an independent jazz label founded in 1997 with the goal of bringing jazz music and instrumental technique to a younger audience. The label supports music education through **The Commission Project**, a nonprofit based in Rochester, NY. Through TCP, Sons of Sound underwrites residencies at Princeton University, including Bob Mintzer in 2003-2004 and Jimmy Heath in 2004-2005.

For additional information see the label’s website at <http://sonsofsound.com>. For more about The Commission Project, see <http://tcp-music.org/> and <http://swingnjazz.org>.

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