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PRESS RELEASE

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Pablo Held Trio **Recondita Armonia**

Release date: November 3, 2015

Pirouet Records · PIT3085

Pablo Held · piano

Robert Landfermann · bass

Jonas Burgwinkel · drums

1. **Offertoire** from l'Orgue Mystique Op. 57
2. **Fragments**
3. **Prélude No. 3** from 12 Préludes
4. **Feuillet d'Album Op. 58**
5. **Mountain Horn Song** from Romanian Folk Songs
6. **Agnus Dei** from Mass
7. **Interludium No. 5** from Ludus Tonalis
8. **Recondita Armonia** from Tosca

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Herbie, Bill, Bartók and Puccini

Hidden harmony, or what an amazingly interconnected world!

Recondita Armonia is the Pablo Held Trio's new CD, as pianist Held takes a bow towards such composers as Mompou, Stravinsky, Scriabin, and Rachmaninoff, at the same time maintaining his own unique sound.

The Pablo Held trio takes a bow to the classics. As is usual with this trio, it is somewhat different than one would expect. Familiar classical pieces in new clothes? Nope. These selections are labors of love, music that means a lot to the 28 year old German pianist and partners bassist Robert Landfermann and drummer Jonas Burgwinkel. They wanted to take a different path after the trio's previous much-lauded CD, their meeting with the American master guitarist John Scofield (2014 PIT 3078). One critic praised

the album as "magical"; another, Stefan Hentz from the German weekly, *DIE ZEIT*, heard improvisation "raised to a higher level, up and over the borders of status, generation, and continent". Now the trio takes off in a very different direction—the CD *Recondita Armonia*, named after the famous romance from Giacomo Puccini's opera *Tosca*. The title means "hidden harmony", and music fans of the most diverse genres should be able to see the stars light up when listening to this music. ▶





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► Held, Landfermann, and Burgwinkel wanted to record “ballads”—so they borrowed pieces and inspiration from such composers as Puccini, Rachmaninoff, Bartók, Stravinsky, and Scriabin. The trio have frequently performed classical works, and compositions from Federico Mompou, Olivier Messiaen, and Manu de Falla have appeared on earlier CDs. Pablo Held comments that the trio has “intensified” the integration of classical compositions into their music. Held goes on to say that this development has reached its highpoint on this CD: “The idea of dedicating ourselves completely to this music was coupled with our long-held desire to record a ballad album.” With this trio, the term “ballad” does not necessarily mean that all the pieces are going to be soft and quiet. Held and colleagues reject anything that constricts them.

The CD also contains music that comes entirely out of the Pablo Held Trio’s musical world. “The only mission that we have is to play honest music and thus come nearer to whatever is in us,” says Held. “Most of the time we play my compositions or freely improvise, but now and again we play pieces from Mompou, Stravinsky, Bartók, etc. We treat them the same way we do my pieces and standards.” In other words there is no pedagogic or marketing intent

behind these choices (such as ‘Held plays themes from the best-loved classics’); rather—as is always the case with this trio—the choices are the results of an artistic compulsion.

And the listener can discover new worlds. For instance, the trio draws on the music from Charles Tournemire’s *Offertorium* from his mammoth work *L’Orgue Mystique*. Tournemire first became known to Held through his teacher and pianist-colleague Hubert Nuss. It was music that immediately “extremely moved” Held. Tournemire was an organist who also improvised. Held said that, “Up until now I have never heard anyone who could improvise like Charles Tournemire did in his organ improvisation on the 1931 *Cantilène* recording. Held adds, “for the most part I play *Offertoire* by myself here, and stay relatively close to the musical notation. In both sections, where the *Gregorian Chants* come in in the original, the trio improvises together over a pedal point. I rewrote the last two bars of the piece as a closing vamp in 7/4.”

The histories behind the choices of the pieces are fascinating. Held became familiar with *Fragments*, the short Rachmaninoff piece, through his father, who is also a pianist. Pablo grew up with the music of Catalan Federico ►





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► Mompou. Mompou's music was continually played in his parents' house, and Mompou's musical language is a major influence, continually in Held's "inner ear" whenever he improvises. Because Held wanted to pierce through the mysteries of Alexander Scriabin's "*Feuillet d'Album*" he put the piece on repeat and listened to the piece again and again for a whole day. For Held, it is "music filled with wondrous sounds in which you can completely lose yourself." Béla Bartók's *Mountain Horn Song*, is number four out of his suite of six Romanian Folk Dances. Bartók was also a musicologist who collected and analyzed folk music from his native Hungary and the surrounding East European countries. Held discovered the piece from the CD of a guitarist who had compiled works of classical music; the

piece grabbed him. It was fellow musician Niels Klein who introduced Held to the *Agnus Dei* that appears in Igor Stravinsky's Mass. There were tours during which Held would "listen to the Mass before every concert. He found the *Agnus Dei* as well as the *Sanctus* from the Mass especially captivating. The way to German composer Paul Hindemith's *Ludus Tonalis* crossed through one of Held's important role models, Herbie Hancock. Hancock had prepared himself for his tour with Chick Corea by practicing Chopin, Bach, Debussy, Ravel, and Hindemith. When he learned of this, Held got hold of the recordings, and later found out that his teacher John Taylor had long ago taken these same pieces to heart. The title piece, Puccini's romance *Recondita Armonia*, has something to do with ►





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► Miles Davis; Miles and Gil Evans had planned to record an adaptation of Puccini’s opera *Tosca*, and as a fanatic Miles fan, Held immediately obtained the recording that Miles purportedly had listened to: the 1963 version with Leontyne Price under the direction of Herbert von Karajan; Held was “continuously ensnared” in its romance.

On *Recondita Armonia*, *Fragments*, and *Prelude No. 3*, Held wrote chord symbols over the original notes, as is typical in jazz, thus making it easier to play over the piece’s general feel without always having to refer back to the notation. On Scriabin’s *Feuillet d’Album*, Held outlined the composition’s musical essence. His sketch allowed freedom for new interpretations and improvisation. On *Mountain Horn Song*, Held allowed certain freedoms that had to do with keys. The original melody is over an A pedal point: Pablo transposed specific segments into F minor, Bb major, and Db major in order to create a chordal connection.

These changes also help when, taking a bow to the great pianist Bill Evans, Held composed a contrasting coda—Pablo treasures those “marvelous little codas that Evans wrote for his trio at the end of many of the jazz standards”. The trio plays Stravinsky’s *Agnus Dei* slightly changed”; Held distilled the choral voices for the piano part. He employs only a part of Hindemith’s *Ludus Tonalis*, and likewise inserts a coda, which takes up a motif out of Hindemith’s composition.

Recondita Armonia, hidden harmonies—Pablo Held comments about the title that, “Later I realized you could interpret the title in different ways: the harmonies between Robert, Jonas, and myself that are sometimes more, sometimes less hidden, and the ‘hidden harmonies’ between jazz and classical (between all music genres for that matter) are always at hand. And then there are the hidden harmonies between us humans. ■





Discography

Pablo Held Trio on Pirouet Records



- 2015** Pablo Held Trio: **Recondita Armonia** (Pablo Held, p · Robert Landfermann, b · Jonas Burgwinkel, dr) · **PIT3085**
- 2014** Pablo Held: **The Trio meets John Scofield**
(Pablo Held, p · Robert Landfermann, b · Jonas Burgwinkel, dr · John Scofield, git) · **PIT3078**
- 2013** Pablo Held: **Elders** (Pablo Held, p · Robert Landfermann, b · Jonas Burgwinkel, dr · Jason Seizer, ts · Domenic Landolf, afl · Ronny Graupe, git) · **PIT3075**
- 2012** Pablo Held: **Trio Live** (Pablo Held, p · Robert Landfermann, b · Jonas Burgwinkel, dr) · **PIT3066**
- 2011** Pablo Held: **Glow** (Menzel Mutzke, tp · Sebastian Gille, ts, ss · Niels Klein, bcl,ts,ss · Kathrin Pechlof, harp · Hubert Nuss, celesta, harmonium · Henning Sieverts, b, cello · Dietmar Fuhr, b · Robert Landfermann, b · Jonas Burgwinkel, dr · Pablo Held, p) · **PIT3053**
- 2010** Pablo Held: **Music** (Pablo Held, p · Robert Landfermann, b · Jonas Burgwinkel, dr) · **PIT3045**
- 2008** Pablo Held: **Forest of Oblivion** (Pablo Held, p · Robert Landfermann, b · Jonas Burgwinkel, dr) · **PIT3032**

