



Jimmy Greene *Flowers – Beautiful Life, Volume 2*

GRAMMY® Award-nominated saxophonist, composer and arranger **Jimmy Greene** wrote and recorded an album three years ago that no parent should ever have to make—*Beautiful Life* celebrated the life of **Ana Márquez-Greene**, his 6-year-old daughter who was murdered along with 19 other children and six educators on December 14, 2012 at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut. Now, Greene continues to honor and memorialize her spirit with *Flowers – Beautiful Life, Volume 2*, his second release for Mack Avenue Records.

As on his acclaimed Mack Avenue debut, *Beautiful Life*, a poignant, reflective recording that honored his daughter's love of singing with a program combining jazz, spirituals, contemporary Christian music and ballads, Greene again fulfills his stated imperative of "reflecting the way that Ana lived." Here, Greene hones in on Ana's love of dance with a kinetic, groove-filled program comprising ten original compositions—including two Greene-penned lyrics—and his arrangement of the "new standard," "Something About You."

Feeding the fire on six tracks is Jimmy Greene's *Love In Action*, a unit comprising veteran all-stars **Renee Rosnes** on piano and Fender Rhodes, bassist **John Patitucci** and drummer **Jeff "Tain" Watts**, with **Rogério Boccato** on an array of percussion instruments, and, on three selections, next-generation guitar hero **Mike Moreno**. Raising a joyful noise on the other five pieces is Greene's quartet, with first-callers including keyboardist **Kevin Hays**, bassist **Ben Williams**, and drummer **Otis Brown, III**. Greene himself solos on tenor and soprano saxophone with melodic focus, harmonic ingenuity and soulful authority.

"For this new recording, I wanted a different sound and feeling than what we achieved on *Beautiful Life*. I've been close to Otis for many years and love his deep sense of groove combined with an ability to make things feel explosive and loose. Ben makes everything feel great—he can process anything and make it his own. Kevin's open ears and expansive vocabulary lets him go anywhere the music takes you.

"Renee, John and Tain were my heroes when I was developing as a young musician," Greene continues, recalling that they first convened as a unit in May 2013 at Hartford's Artists Collective, soon after he began to work through his grief by focusing on the *Beautiful Life* project. "Rogério is a master of all kinds of Brazilian rhythms. I thought the different sounds and textures he can create would work well with Tain."

The centered yet open-ended quality of the proceedings has much to do with the raw materials provided in Greene's well-wrought originals. He credits doctoral studies at Manhattan School of Music—where he matriculated in the fall of 2013, after most of the music for *Beautiful Life* had been recorded—as facilitating his growth as a composer. "Although I've done a lot of writing, I'd never stepped back and studied it in a directed way," he says. "I needed something to focus on other than my grieving process—some musical goal to work towards."

He vividly recalls a comment by Horace Silver, a frequent employer during the late '90s, that, although he liked the music on *Brand New World*, Greene's first commercial release, he "wanted to hear more songs that people can tap their foot to, that have a more danceable groove." He continues: "So the idea of making something drum and dance-centered was brewing for a while and the fact that Ana loved music you can move to was a huge motivation."

At MSM, Greene took an independent study with Boccato that consisted of composing songs based on specific Brazilian rhythms. One of those pieces is "Stanky Leg," a dance mentioned in a 2015 pop hit, on which Watts and Boccato morph from samba during Greene's skipping soprano sax solo to a West African 6/8 for Rosnes' piano declamation. Another is "Second Breakfast," a lyric refrain on which the drum masters propel solos by Patitucci, Greene and Rosnes with juxtaposed partido alto and maracatu rhythms. Greene also sets up partido alto and 6/8 beats on the flowing "Amantes (Lovers)," which conveys the intimacy of his relationship with Nelba Márquez-Greene, his wife and soul mate since both were teenagers.

Ana's frequent greeting ("Hey, big guy!") to her 6'6" father provides the title for the hard-swinging opening track, which Greene wrote after finding sheet music with a chord progression written by Jackie McLean, his mentor at Hartt, to which no melody was attached. On "Fun Circuits," titled for Ana's remark to her mother after a bad day at work.

“don’t ever let them suck your fun circuits dry,” Watts and Boccato channel Greene’s conception of the exuberance that the body’s fun circuits might generate.

“Stink Thumb” proceeds to Brown’s up-tempo New Orleans Second Line (a function that Greene internalized during eight years with Harry Connick, Jr.’s Big Band), so titled in recognition of Ana’s act of willpower in ending a lifelong thumb-sucking habit on her first day of kindergarten. On his re-imagined blues “Thirty-Two,” Greene juxtaposes a melodic line crammed with interval leaps with Williams’ staunch bass ostinato and Brown’s percolating funk beats.

Greene inserts dissonant 12-tone elements into passages of “December” to convey the sense of “disorientation and confusion” that he has experienced every holiday season since his daughter’s untimely death, while the major chords that form the raw materials of Hays’ piano solo and Brown’s drum solo denote his joy in remembering his daughter’s beautiful life. “It’s the idea that, despite our circumstances, while we’re living on this earth, we still need to do all we can to move forward,” he says.

In contrast to the dance rhythms that permeate *Flowers – Beautiful Life, Volume 2*, “Someday” is a lush, songbook-like ballad. **Jean Baylor** applies her glorious mezzo-soprano to Greene’s lyric on the necessity of “not taking for granted any moment of your family’s presence or life, because you may not get *someday*.”

The title track, sung with deep feeling by **Sheena Rattai** (best known for her association with the folk trio Red Moon Road, she sang in the big band Greene conducted when he taught at the University of Manitoba at the end of the ’00s and knew Ana), refers to the book of beautiful hand-drawn, hand-colored flowers, inscribed “from Ana to Dad,” that Greene found in Ana’s playroom when he returned home after a long vigil on the day she was killed. “It was Christmas time, but it wasn’t supposed to be a Christmas gift,” he says. “She just wanted to do something nice for Dad. She’d normally do things like that for no other reason than to brighten someone’s day. That is indicative of who my little girl was.”

About Jimmy Greene

A native of Hartford, CT, Jimmy Greene has been considered one of the most respected musicians of his generation since his graduation from the Hartt School of Music in 1997; the saxophonist went on to garner awards from ASCAP/IAJE, Chamber Music America, Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism, Greater Hartford Arts Council and was named one of *DownBeat Magazine’s* 25 Young Rising Stars in Jazz in 1999. Greene was mentored by Jackie McLean, Jim McNeely, Justin DiCioccio, David Liebman, Phil Markowitz, Steve Davis, and others, and has recorded and/or performed with artists including Horace Silver, Freddie Hubbard, Harry Connick, Jr., Tom Harrell, Avishai Cohen, Kenny Barron, Lewis Nash, Steve Turre and more. In 2014, Greene released *Beautiful Life* on Mack Avenue Records and received two GRAMMY® Award nominations in the Best Jazz Instrumental Album category and Best Arrangement, Instruments and Vocals for “When I Come Home,” which features Javier Colon.

Greene is Assistant Professor of Music and Coordinator of Jazz Studies at Western Connecticut State University in Danbury, CT and previously served as Assistant Professor of Jazz Saxophone at the University of Manitoba, Visiting Assistant Professor of Music at Purchase College (State University of New York), Lecturer at the Jackie McLean Institute of Jazz at the Hartt School (University of Hartford) and as an Instructor at the Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts.

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