



Paula Shocron
Germán Lamonega
Pablo Díaz
Tensegridad

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The **SLD Trio** is an exciting and adventurous group of young musicians from Buenos Aires. The Argentinian capital is not a city that is exactly known for an extensive free-jazz and improvised music scene; however, there is a dedicated core of artists and musicians in the city, and the members of this piano trio, pianist Paula Shocron, bassist Germán Lamonega, and drummer Pablo Díaz, are at the heart of it.

Individually, they have studied at institutions like the Classical Composition at Rosario University, and the Contemporary Music School (part of the Berklee International Network, which is run by the popular music school in Boston), as well as the University of Fine Arts in La Plata. They have been working together for years, along with other important Buenos Aires musicians like Enrique Norris. All the while, their musical rapport has grown closer and closer, and most recently the trio has been greatly expanding their network of collaborators and welcoming new influences.

The evidence is found on the SLD Trio's first album *Anfitrión* (Nendo Dengo Records, 2015). On the album there is a cycle of songs with dedications indicated by cryptic initials - R.C., W.P., R.M., D.J., and C.M. After scratching the surface some it turns out that these are dedications to the musicians that the trio met on an extremely influential trip from Buenos Aires to New York in 2014. For the members of the trio, this visit set them down a path that has catalyzed into a rapid integration and synthesis of their prior influences and new experiences into something all their own.

In New York, their musical adventures led them to meetings and collaborations with prominent Avant-Garde and experimental musicians like William Parker (W.P.), Ras Moshe (R.M.), Darius Jones (D.J.), and Cooper-Moore (C.M.). However, who is

missing in this list is the namesake for R.C., which happens to be the late trumpeter Roy Campbell. His presence, and then sudden absence, probably played the most important part in this meeting.

The story goes: a few years ago, the group was in contact with Campbell, who invited them to visit New York City, meet people, study, and play. Then, more weeks before the trio was set to travel, Campbell passed away from heart disease and the jazz world was robbed of an important and original voice, and the SLD Trio, their ambassador. So, when the group arrived, they instead were welcomed to the community, of which the trumpeter had been a towering figure, by pianist Cooper-Moore. He in turn introduced them to bassist William Parker, saxophonists Ras Moshe and Darius Jones, and poet Steve Dalachinsky. Through the generosity of these prominent figures of the New York City improvisational music scene, the trio played throughout the city, soaking up wisdom and energy. It is probably safe to say that the loose set of connections that led to these encounters helped to light a fire under the trio, leading to their first recording *Anfitrión*, which was also their first recorded attempt at an all improvised approach. It is a fire that is still burning strong throughout this new album, *Tensegridad*. As Lamonega explains of the recording, "the process of recording *Tensegridad* was almost exactly the same as *Anfitrión*, we went to the studio and played. We only discuss the approach of the original compositions like 'Firuletes' in *Anfitrión* or 'Truth' and 'Snake Out' on *Tensegridad*."

Turning then to the album's title, the term "tensegridad" is the Spanish translation of the word "tensegrity" - a portmanteau coined by the 20th Century inventor and visionary R. Buckminster Fuller in the 1960s that combined the words "tensional" and "integrity". The term refers to the strength and internal cohesiveness of interconnected individual components. The pieces may or may not actually be connected directly, but they are a part of the web of interconnectedness that gives the whole structure its form and strength. A classic example of this term is the geodesic dome, a self-supporting structure that Fuller popularized and had its heyday in the 60s and 70s. The word however, has traveled beyond architecture and into other disciplines like biology, where the word 'biotensegrity' is used to describe the body's muscular-skeletal system is a connection of muscle and bone that operates in a comparable manner.

This latter definition is important to Shocron and Díaz, for whom dance and movement are integral to their art and being. At

a show in an unusually spacious coffeehouse/co-working space in Brooklyn, I watched as the trio performed. During the performance, after a particularly fiery passage, Shocron played herself right off the piano and into modern dance. Her movements reacted to the music that her bandmates continued making and added new elements of sound – slaps, stomps, taps. As Diaz explained, he knew the term from his own studies in physical movement and meditation, chose the title for a track on the album, which then became the title of the album. Applying it to the music, he says “Tensegrity means to me the way we interact together while we are playing music. We are one, and we are three, at the same time.”

The album starts with one. Lamonega plays a solo bass introduction to the track ‘Vera’. His tone is rich, and the legato phrases and double-stops lay a strong foundation for his bandmates. When the other instruments arrive, the piano’s hypnotic arpeggios and the solid pulse of the percussion generate a mounting intensity. Throughout, the motion is created by the energy of repetition, growing every higher until it breaks, where at the end Lamonega is left alone, again, to end the track.

‘Snake Out’ begins with Shocron concentrating on the piano’s lower register, her attack is sharp and determined. These are not delicate or tender melodies being expressed, rather the trio is making a bold musical statement. The interconnectedness of their approach is the focus here, and the intensity of the song is the result of years of close listening and strong reactions.

‘Truth’, which is constructed around the Diaz’s percussion, turns down the tension and intensity that undergirded the first two tracks. This reflective piece begins with a quiet exploration of sound – the rattle and ring of varied percussion instruments, the unique thrum of a drum head rubbed by a slightly dampened fingertip. It is this accretion of smaller sounds that Shocron joins with a gentle evolving minimal melody that reveals her classical training and musical sensibilities, the track is an instant composition, one of tension filled longing and poignant note choices. It is the tracks timeless feel makes the next track take on an air of urgency.

The title track ‘Tensegridad’ is the first track on the album where the trio begins as one. As if the first three pieces were sequenced to introduce the elements of the structure, which now is revealed. Shocron’s approach is melodic and driving, the strident movement of the chords giving the song its geometric shape. A quick build-up ensues with Diaz’s drums follow along, reacting and ultimately reinforcing the angles, and finally hooking up with Lamonega’s brisk walking lines, which adds a heft to the captivating, and all to soon over, track. The follow up, ‘El Origen del Lenguaje,’ *Origin of the Language*, begins with free and exploratory percussion. Drips of notes from the piano appear, like spots of color on the dark hatch marked canvass. Indeed, it is like a primer on the origins of this group’s musical language.

‘Connie’, is a tribute to Connie Crothers, the New York based pianist, composer, and educator who passed away somewhat suddenly in 2016. Crothers loss, like Campbell, also sent deep ripples of sadness across the New York improvised music community, which was felt by Shocron. The connection between these two pianists is obvious, and the emotion that imbued Crother’s work has deeply affected Shocron, as the track is the emotional highlight of the recording. The juxtaposition of intense feeling with quiet reflection is incredibly effective. Diaz and Lamonega defer to Shocron as her passion erupts from the keyboard.

The next track, ‘Casa Rodante’, is a defiant piece, and moments may remind of the angular approach of pianist Matthew Shipp. The track is also one the lighter hearted ones on the album. The groove Diaz establishes is engagingly complex and invites a highly rhythmic response from the rest of the group as they build in density. There exists an intensity to the playing that truly reveals how closely these three have been working together – in a sense they have forever – as there was no conscientious point where they said they were a ‘band’, they were (and still are friends) who began playing together, and the music comes from all of them.

It is towards the end of album, where Shocron’s voice joins the group. Her poem ‘Universo tiene sentido’ directs the music, and provides a sliver of hope in some dark times. Readers in the future will no doubt remember the end of 2016 and the start of 2017 as a time of great uncertainty, a time when the balances and sensibilities of the previous politics and accepted norms in society seemed to give way, with politicians exploiting intolerance and fomenting disenfranchisement and voters giving in to reactionary and self-protective instincts. While it is hard to say what the world will look and feel like when this album is being heard and these notes are being read, Shocron’s poem speaks to a larger truth, a universal one that is tolerant and empowering, one

that connects the musicians of New York City with the musicians in Buenos Aires and throughout the world. Here is the poem, translated from the Spanish by Shocron, that is heard on the track:

*Universe makes sense
Universe is far away
Universe is here, outside
The Street-Universe with all its diversities
the movements
chaos*

*The sound is color, and the color is skin, and the words smell of
that universal, of ours,
of infinite universe, of everywhere sounds,
that come together here,
in this paper,
in these hands,
and they sound, by the way
familiar, unique, diverse,
as we are
Universe-Humans*

The final track, 'Yeelen', is a piece modeled in the classic free-jazz mold. There are elements in the improvised melody that suggest the obtuse humor and jauntiness of a Thelonious Monk song, but with an energy all their own. It's a strong closer to a strong album, an energetic reminder of how interlocking and indispensable each member is to the group's approach.

Just for the sake of argument, the term 'tensegridad' has been left as one that describes architectural integrity, the musical skeletal system, and the music of the trio. However, it is also one that can be applied to the web of musicians, labels, venues, and audiences that are the rods, strings, cables, tendons, sinews and bones that comprise the self-supporting components of the small, but enthusiastic, community of avant-garde and free-improvisation. It is also the origin of this new album. HatHut's Werner X. Uehlinger contacted the SLD Trio to purchase a copy of *Anfitrión*, explains Paula, they were humbled by the request and without hesitation simply sent a copy of the album. They were not expecting what happened next: an offer to release their next recording on the venerable Swiss label.

This is a lovely and exciting album from a trio that is just as willing to give as to receive, and ready to synthesize the familiar with the unknown. On *Tensegridad*, these three strong, empathetic musicians are flexing their creative muscles, working hard together to share their excitement in making music, and giving back the community that they have received as much from.

So, what next for the SLD Trio? The group is cautious, and not ready to make big statements, but, sensing the opportunities that come with new connections, a tour in Europe would be nice they say. In the meantime, right now, whenever now is, enjoy the wonderful music being made by this trio, after all, you too add to the tensegrity.

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Germán Lamonega
Pablo Díaz

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Paul Acquaro

Paula Shocron
Germán Lamonega
Pablo Díaz
Tensegridad

Paula Shocron *piano*
 Germán Lamonega *double bass*
 Pablo Díaz *drums*

All compositions by Paula Shocron, Germán Lamonega and Pablo Díaz (except otherwise indicated), Tuhtah Publishing SUISA.

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 File under: Jazz/Free Improvisation

1	Vera <i>by Germán Lamonega</i> ISRC CH 131.1701514	7:08
2	Snake Out <i>by Mal Waldron</i> ISRC CH 131.1701515	6:53
3	Truth <i>by Charles Tolliver</i> ISRC CH 131.1701516	5:47
4	Tensegridad <i>by Shocron-Lamonega-Díaz</i> ISRC CH 131.1701517	4:44
5	El origen Del Lenguaje <i>by Pablo Díaz</i> ISRC CH 131.1701518	4:51
6	Connie <i>by Paula Shocron</i> ISRC CH 131.1701519	4:12
7	Casa Rodante <i>by Shocron-Lamonega-Díaz</i> ISRC CH 131.1701520	6:48
8	Universo Tiene Sentido <i>by Paula Shocron</i> ISRC CH 131.1701521	4:39
9	Yeelen <i>by Shocron-Lamonega-Díaz</i> ISRC CH 131.1701522	5:19
Total Time ADD ²⁴ Bit		50:25



Albert Ayler Quartet
 Copenhagen Live 1964
 hatOLOGY 665

Anthony Braxton Quintet
 (Basel) 1977
 hatOLOGY 676

Albert Ayler Quartet
 European Radio Studio
 Recordings 1964
 hatOLOGY 678

Myra Melford Trio
 Alive At The House
 Of Saints, Part 1
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Jackson Harrison Trio
 Sintering
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 Invisible Touch
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 hatOLOGY 743



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