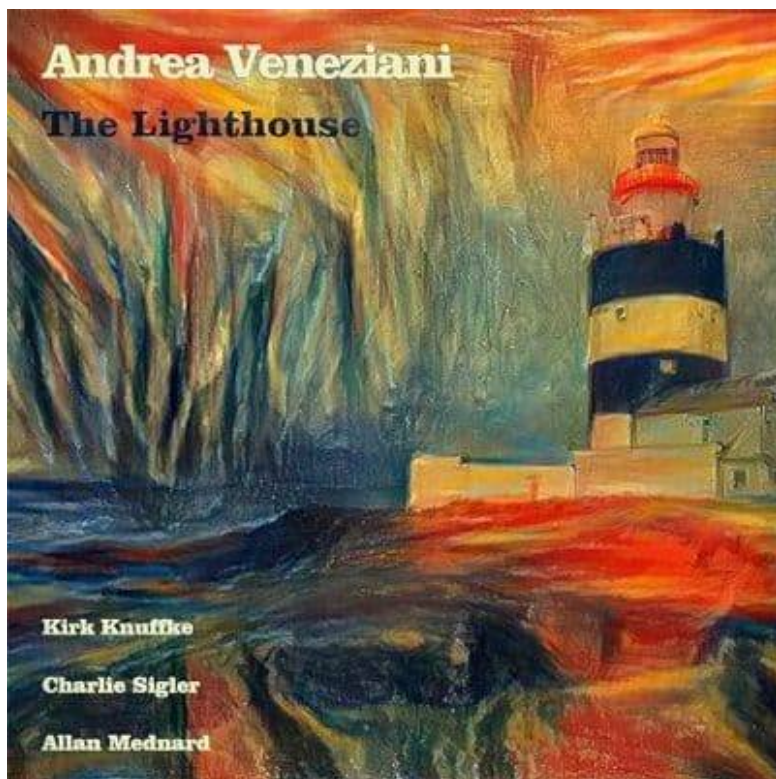
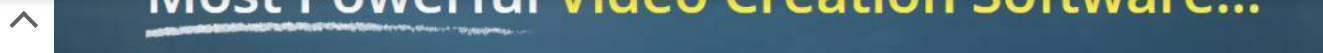


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Andrea Veneziani

The Lighthouse

Self-released

Bassist and composer, the Italian-born **Andrea Veneziani** delivers his second album as a leader, *The Lighthouse*, featuring a quartet of cornetist **Kirk Knuffke**, who is clearly and deservedly making the rounds these days, guitarist **Charlie Sigler**, and drummer **Allan Mednard** for the bassist's eight originals. There is an eleven-year

gap between this one and Veneziani's trio rendered debut, *Olteoceano*, yet Veneziani feels the pieces bear a similar aesthetic. Since arriving in NYC from Italy in 2009 on a Fulbright scholarship, and later earning a Masters from NYU in Music Performance, the bassist has performed with many mainstream and creative music scene musicians in the city and his busy touring schedule impeded the opportunity to record until recently.

The program opens with the title track, a graceful piece that evokes Wayne Shorter's type of harmonic structures. As the lead voice, Knuffke's tone, as per usual, is crisp, elegant, and pristine while we also hear an extended pizzicato run from the leader and fluid stylings from Sigler. "In Perpetuum" ebbs to a mid-tempo with a looping form that remains suspended, as if in ether, to

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“Gravity” moves further down the pendulum into a sheer ballad, following the bassist’s introduction. Its melody will evoke for some the indelible Thad Jones’s “A Child Is Born” but through shifts and changes eventually finds its own footing with Knuffke’s dulcet cornet in an impossibly warm turn and Sigler following suit. All this delicate restraint slackens completely on “Bop-Be,” morphing to an all-out freewheeling exercise for each quartet member after the head. “Rainbows” slips back initially into the ballad mode with Knuffke again in comfy form, through to a 6/4 vamp, jagged Sigler runs, a prominent, inventive Mednard, and a final section that curiously just fades out.

The standout jazz waltz in $\frac{3}{4}$ time, “Twelve Clowns” is based on a twelve-tone row and has Knuffke playing through a mute as he and Sigler dance through the changes in this most animated piece, that perhaps more so than any, reveals the leader’s flair for composition. Mednard’s cymbal work is especially noteworthy as well. “Seasons” is a mid-tempo straight-ahead piece focusing on the interplay between Sigler and Mednard while the closer, “Shunting Line” is a circular uplifting piece with Knuffke expressing bliss over Sigler’s comping while Mednard applies the samba tinge, pushing the momentum for Sigler’s rapidly cascading lines before ceding to the leader’s bouncy pizzicato run, making emphatic statements of his own on the eights, and finally coalescing the quartet into a definitive climax in one sustained chord.

Bravo!

- Jim Hynes

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