

BASSIST MICHAEL SHARFE

By now we are quite sure that this bassist should be honored far beyond his native Cincinnati and hope that this CD will introduce audiences to this outstanding musician.

-- Fritz Balwit, *Audiophile Audition* review of "Sanguinaria"

In four decades of playing, native Cincinnati Michael Sharfe has established himself as the premier jazz bassist of the Cincinnati region. His talent, passion, versatility and restless musical curiosity have led to appearances on more than 250 CDs and 150 vinyl discs, from jazz in all its forms to Latin to pops orchestras, Broadway shows, R&B, gospel, film scores and all the way through pop music.

While performing regularly throughout the Ohio/Kentucky/Indiana region, Sharfe also directs a thriving weekend jazz series at Cincinnati's Washington Platform. Sharfe founded the series to fill a void in the city's musical scene, building it into a regular weekend series in which he hosts and books a cross-section of jazz styles and performers, from established veterans to young lions. It was an appearance by guitarist Brad Myers on this series that sparked the guitar-and-bass collaboration leading to the "Sanguinaria (Hopefulsongs)" CD project.

A founding member of the Blue Wisp Big Band, a jazz institution in Cincinnati for 37 years, Sharfe continues to perform and record with the group, including a 2016 public-television concert featuring trumpeter Terell Stafford. He's also the longtime bassist for the composer-driven PsychoAcoustic Orchestra, led by pianist/composer Pat Kelly, whose most recent CD is 2016's "Fun With Notes." His regular appearances with the Cincinnati Pops Orchestra led him to an association with Michael Feinstein; work with Rosemary Clooney; recordings with John Pizzarelli, the Manhattan Transfer and New York Voices; and a featured performance with Mercedes Ellington at Carnegie Hall for the Pops' 1999 celebration of Duke Ellington's centenary.

Along with the Cincinnati Pops, he has appeared with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra and the Cincinnati Wind Symphony (in the world premiere of Frank Zappa's "Dog Breath Variations") and plays frequent guest slots with the Kentucky Symphony Orchestra and with maestro Carmon DeLeone's Middletown Symphony Orchestra, including a 2017 feature with the latter in John Williams' "Escapades." Touring credits include two European tours with pianist/composer Lynne Arriale as well as tours with guitar guru Adrian Belew. In Cincinnati, in addition to the duo work with Brad Myers showcased on "Sanguinaria," he is a guiding voice in several small jazz ensembles, including Mambo Combo, a six-piece Cuban-inflected Latin jazz group; Pan Vibe, playing jazz for steel drum and vibes; Retro Nouveau, playing post-bop a la John Coltrane; and Trio Pi (Plus One or Two), dedicated to deep grooves and swing.

In his 2014 CD "The Sideman Theory," Sharfe reflected on his musical life as a consummate sideman, a career that has included performances and recordings with such luminaries as the revered Brazilian guitarist Laurindo Almeida; Weather Report drummer Peter Erskine; tenor sax visionary Joe Lovano; clarinet virtuoso Eddie Daniels; rock guitar prodigy Peter Frampton; jazz guitar giants John Scofield, Herb Ellis and Joe Pass; bop legends such as saxist Sonny Stitt, trumpeter Red Rodney, clarinetist Buddy DeFranco and trombonist Slide Hampton; contemporary steel drum masters Victor Provost and Othello Molineaux; and local giants such as guitarists Dan Faehnle and Scotty Anderson and piano great Frank Vincent, to name only a few.

Sharfe credits his extended tenure in the house trio at Cincinnati's fabled Blue Wisp jazz club, with drummer John Von Ohlen and pianist Steve Schmidt, as being particularly formative in his jazz career: Through its heyday, he notes, the club "had jazz stars from New York coming in just about every week. People from New York told me that I was getting to play with more people than if I'd moved to New York. There was a constant influx of new music, and that's how I cut my teeth."

Sharfe also considers himself lucky to have become heavily involved in the studio scene before electronic sampling, "back when all music had to be made by people playing real instruments," and to have come of age as a jazz musician at a time when Cincinnati still had a broad, deep and robust jazz scene -- one dominated by remarkable players who were formed by the street. He honors his jazz elders while continuing his quest to explore the myriad possibilities jazz offers.