



## **OBLIQSOUND TO RELEASE MASSIMO BIOLCATI'S PERSONA ON MARCH 18, 2008 IN USA AND CANADA**

### **Bassist's First Album As Leader Features Lizz Wright, Gretchen Parlato and Lionel Loueke**

For several years, bassist Massimo Biolcati has provided strong support for a variety of acclaimed jazz artists, including Terence Blanchard, Lizz Wright, Ravi Coltrane, Paquito D'Rivera, and Lionel Loueke. Fans of these artists know Biolcati's sound, even though they may be less than familiar with his name. Now, with the upcoming release of Persona [OS 509] on ObliqSound, Biolcati takes a giant stride into the spotlight as a leader. The album will be released on March 18, 2008 in USA and Canada, via HBD/Koch Distribution, followed by worldwide release.

Biolcati's leadership shines on the album, though he claims the CD, which contains ten original compositions, is not purely a solo effort. "I chose all of the musicians because of their unique voices, because I knew they would all work together well in service to my music," says Biolcati. "As I was composing and choosing songs, I had them in mind at all times, and I tried to leave plenty of space in the music for them to express themselves naturally."

Persona's players include label-mate Lionel Loueke (on guitar and vocals,) with whom Biolcati has been collaborating since the two attended both the Berklee School of Music and USC's Thelonious Monk Institute, and who tapped Biolcati for his own recent ObliqSound recording, Virgin Forest. They're joined by Peter Rende (Rebecca Martin, Jen Chapin) on piano, accordion and vocals, and Jeff Ballard (Brad Mehldau, Chick Corea) on drums. Singers Lizz Wright (Verve recording artist) and Gretchen Parlato each contribute a vocal track.

Biolcati titled the album in homage to the Ingmar Bergman film "Persona," and thematically structured the project's music to reflect the film's concept of duality. "Bergman's film features two clearly opposite characters, but at the end, we're not left with a simple good/bad distinction between them. It's a more subtle distinction, which actually brings the two opposites closer together. In the same fashion, I chose to musically divide the songs on Persona into two groups of five songs each: "Motion" and "Stillness," which are obviously opposite, and which convey a clear almost masculine/feminine difference, without any positive or negative connotations."

The "Motion" group of tunes kicks off the album, and features compositions written specifically for this recording, as well as some earlier songs. Both "Deconstruction" and "Transference" were inspired by the Bergman film; Biolcati manages to translate the director's ambiguous psychological explorations into a stimulating musical interpretation of the concept of duality. The other three songs in the "Motion" cycle - "The Beginning," "Wise Way," and "TT" - are equally strong in design and in energy. Biolcati says "Wise Way," was inspired originally by Jeff Ballard's shuffle groove on Chick Corea's and Kurt Rosenwinkle's recordings. "Inspired by this simple yet infectious drum beat, I wrote this piece and I'm thrilled to have Jeff himself play on it." "TT" is dedicated to another drummer, the late Take Toriyama, but, says Biolcati, "It's not a requiem, as I wrote it when he was alive and full of energy, which is the way I want to remember him."

The "Stillness" section of the album reflects a more contemplative aspect. "Winterhouse," with lyrics by the Norwegian poet and writer Mona Vetrhus, was written with its vocalist Lizz Wright in mind. Vocalist Gretchen Parlato co-wrote the lyrics with Biolcati to the love song "Clouds," her vocal contribution to Persona. "Hopeless Dream to Be," which Biolcati says is "perhaps the most introspective piece on the CD," is yet another song written to reflect the spirit of Bergman's film. On "Scandinavia" Biolcati returns to his roots - he grew up in Sweden and Italy - as it echoes the

dorian mode waltzes so common in traditional Swedish folk music. “I had Peter Rende play the accordion to accentuate the folkloric aspect,” he notes.

Born in Stockholm, Sweden, Massimo Biolcati began his musical career at age 16, performing jazz on acoustic bass in Torino, Italy. He returned to Sweden to study at the Royal Music Academy of Stockholm, and soon became a presence both on the local jazz scene and as part of several Scandinavian folk music groups. His early influences range from symphonic rock to Pat Metheny and Dave Holland, all of which have contributed to his strikingly original blend of extended compositions, unusual time signatures, and a lyrical, melodic style.

In his early 20s, he moved to Boston to study at Berklee College of Music and was subsequently selected for the Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz at the University of Southern California. Upon relocating to New York City, he quickly immersed himself in the NY music scene, playing with his peers and with more established artists such as Lizz Wright, Terence Blanchard, Paquito D’Rivera and Ravi Coltrane. He has recorded with Michael Buble’ and Gretchen Parlato as well as with the trio Gilfema, which he formed with Lionel Loueke and drummer Ferenc Nemeth.

Biolcati has already recorded on two albums with ObliqSound, Gilfema (OS 504), the 2005 self-titled debut album of the trio formed by Loueke, Biolcati and Nemeth, and he joined Loueke on his critically acclaimed 2007 release, Virgin Forest. Biolcati was a performer on the song “Kponnon Kpete,” the Virgin Forest track which recently won a 2008 Independent Music Award for Best Song, World Traditional. Signed by label founder and album producer Michele Locatelli to a solo deal in 2007, Biolcati is certain to make his own name more widely known with the release of his striking and complex debut. “I don’t try to be different or original for its own sake,” he concludes. “I just try to be honest and true to my own musical persona.”

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