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DYNAMIC ORIGINAL COMPOSITIONS FEATURED ON
WOODWINDS MASTER MICHAEL O'NEILL'S 5th ALBUM
“AND THEN IT RAINED”
RELEASING SEPTEMBER 18, 2020 on JAZZMO RECORDS

AND THEN IT RAINED, the fifth and newest release by reed master **MICHAEL O'NEILL**, is a departure from his previous albums. His other CDs, which include *The Long and Short of It* (2004), *Still Dancin'* (2007), *New Beginnings* (2014), and *Pacific Standard Time* (2019) all featured vocalists and a program of mostly well-known jazz standards and pop tunes. **AND THEN IT RAINED** is an instrumental project of all original compositions penned by O'Neill.

O'Neill is a mainstay on the San Francisco Bay Area jazz scene, though he almost took a very different career path. Although he started studying clarinet when he was quite young, his parents encouraged him to focus instead on his interest in science. After a stint in the Air Force Band, he entered college as a biology major with a music minor, studying composition, arranging, and jazz performance, all the while playing jazz in clubs in the evenings.

After graduating from college, O'Neill began a career in biology and soon went on to graduate school to pursue a Ph.D. in Insect Physiology at Texas A&M University. Music was still a powerful draw for him, and when he wasn't studying, he was playing around town. After two years of graduate school, he finally decided to pursue his real passion and dedicate himself to a full-time career in music. He moved to the San Francisco Bay Area and began studying with the great Joe Henderson while playing in dance and salsa bands and jazz gigs in local clubs.

It didn't take long for O'Neill to make a name for himself. He signed on to several steady, high-profile gigs including a 13-year engagement at the Ritz Carlton in Half Moon Bay and a seven-year stint at Cetrella on the coast. He has also performed and/or recorded with Idris Muhammad, Joe Locke, Geoffrey Keezer, Michael Wolff, Rodney Jones, Kenny Washington, Jackie Ryan, Tony Lindsay, Akira Tana, Nicolas Bearde, and Smith Dobson among many others. He performs frequently at Yoshi's and all the major venues in the Bay Area.

O'Neill has been writing music for many years, which he performs regularly with different bands that he leads. In the mid 1980's, he began to write music for corporate and industrial films, which led to a very successful career scoring music for documentaries and television. This experience exposed O'Neill to new musical concepts across genres that broadened his musical vocabulary. The demands of composing for institutions like National Geographic and the Discovery Channel led O'Neill to study and digest a wide variety of folk and ethnic music as well as the works of the great symphonic masters. During this time O'Neill developed the discipline to write music every day, even if he wasn't working on a commercial project.

O'Neill has always enjoyed working with great vocalists. His previous album, *Pacific Standard Time*, featured singer Tony Lindsay, who gained fame working with Santana from 1995 to 2015. O'Neill's first three albums featured the world-renowned, Bay Area vocalist Kenny Washington. Their partnership spans over 20 years, and the two have performed together in many notable venues including headlining the San Jose and Monterey Jazz Festivals.

On **AND THEN IT RAINED**, O'Neill plays the tenor, alto, and soprano saxes as well as the clarinet. He is a creative improviser with a warm, robust sound whose powerful range is reflected in his playing. He's joined on the album by top pianist **MICHAEL BLUESTEIN**, who has been a member of the rock super group *Foreigner* since 2008. Bluestein has released several jazz albums as a leader and, also like O'Neill, is a favorite accompanist for jazz singers. Drummer **JASON LEWIS** is a first-call musician in Northern California. He has played with many well-known players including Gary Burton, James Moody, Mark Murphy, Norma Winstone, Larry Coryell, Regina Carter, James Carter, John Handy, and Kurt Elling, to name just a few. **DAN FEISZLI** is one of the most versatile bass players in the Bay Area. Besides appearing on dozens of albums, he is also a top tier recording engineer who was one of the principal engineers at the legendary Fantasy Studios.

O'Neill has wanted to record his original compositions for years, but it kept landing on the back burner because of his very busy schedule. This album actually represents a small slice of his body of work. O'Neill wrote "Port of Spain" in anticipation of a trip that never happened. He originally composed the melody with the steel pans in mind, but plays soprano sax on this disc. As the name implies, "Emerging Impressions" is an impressionistic piece with a classical feel. "Early Spring" was inspired by the harmonies of Bill Evans' "Very Early." O'Neill wrote "One for Kenny" as an homage to his friend and musical compatriot, Kenny Washington. O'Neill was looking through some old books of music he had written and came across "Cloudscape." He re-worked the melody, which reminded him of looking at clouds out of an airplane window.

O'Neill grew up surfing in San Diego and lived near the coast for many years. "Maverick's Samba" is his impression of the surf break near Half Moon Bay, south of San Francisco. O'Neill sat down to write one afternoon when it started raining. "And Then It Rained," the title tune, is O'Neill's impression of that gentle, tropical rainstorm. "Song for Mama Bear" is a tribute to jazz fan Pegi Brandley, nicknamed Mama Bear because she nurtured and supported jazz musicians. "Four Cornered Circle" is O'Neill's tribute to great jazz quartets like Coltrane's and Charles Lloyd's, that have so inspired him over the years. "Suite Iris" refers to a house he rented for 15 years on a street called Iris Court. The landlord purposely charged him below market rent to help support O'Neill at the beginning of his career. "Dreams We Left Behind" represents O'Neill's musings on the choices we make and the dreams we leave behind when we head down the new, different, and unplanned paths that life presents to us.

Michael O'Neill's music has an expressive quality, as if each note were a song lyric that told a story. His compositions have that same quality. The tunes have a modern edge, but the melodies are very approachable and are more focused on the heart than the head, more concerned with expressing lovely impressions than showing off his considerable technical prowess.

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AND THEN IT RAINED will be released on September 18, 2020 and will be available online everywhere.

Online:

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