

**Chick Corea & Béla Fleck**  
*The Enchantment*

As befitting jazz, where stylistic boundaries slide away in the face of creativity, last year an innovative but unlikely pairing of two virtuoso instrumentalists – pianist **Chick Corea** and banjo player **Béla Fleck** – was born. In December 2006, the renowned pianist joined the extraordinary banjoist to make the spirited duo recording, *The Enchantment*, on Concord Records. The unique project features the pair ebulliently performing songs they each contributed to the album and taking them to new depths by their collaborative chemistry. Teeming with improvisational spirit and beauty and infused with the jazz sensibility, the music is at turns influenced by classical, ragtime, bluegrass, country, the blues and world.

Corea and Fleck have admired each other’s music for several years. “I first heard Chick’s recording of his composition ‘Spain’ [from the 1972 Return to Forever album *Light as a Feather*], and it was one of those defining moments,” says Fleck, one of the most talented banjo players in the world and a multi-Grammy Award winner. “That’s when I realized that the banjo would work in jazz. A year later I got to hear Chick in person with Return to Forever. That was also a shock to my system. I stayed up all night trying to figure out how to play what those guys were playing – on my banjo. By morning, I knew it could be done.”

After that revelation, Fleck closely followed Corea’s creative journey and even once in his early career approached the master pianist to give him some of his original music to listen to.

After getting to know Fleck socially, Corea became intrigued by the music that the banjoist and his seminal bluegrass-meets-bebop band, the Flecktones, were recording. “It’s totally unusual to hear a banjo played that way,” says Corea, an NEA Jazz Master and likewise a multiple Grammy Award winner. “Béla was taking the instrument and the tradition of the banjo and bringing it up as a seriously virtuosic instrument. When I first listened to the Flecktones, I heard a completely fresh sound.”

Fleck invited Corea to record three songs on the Flecktones CD, *Tales From the Acoustic Planet* (1994), as well as on the Flecktones in-concert album, *Live Art* (1996).

Corea, in turn, enlisted Fleck to perform with him and Bobby McFerrin on his 2001 *Rendezvous in New York* project recorded live at the Blue Note jazz club in New York. But the pair had never before played in a duet setting.

The genesis of *The Enchantment* came about when the two discussed the potential for a duo project. Corea says, “It came together quickly. We just really hit it. We talked a lot and decided to prepare by writing music first. So Béla wrote and I wrote. We talked on the phone and finally got together in Nashville at [bassist] Edgar Meyer’s studio and rehearsed.”

Fleck recalls, “In Nashville, we threw around ideas for songs, and the next thing I knew, we were in Los Angeles recording the album.” He says that the disc was “one of my greatest experiences as a musician, playing with my hero, Chick Corea.”

Corea returns the compliment by saying that the album has broken new ground for him, with Fleck inspiring him to delve into “unfamiliar territory,” he says. “I love those kinds of challenges, and we had a blast on *The Enchantment*, which has a totally new kind of sound.”

The pair gives new voice to four Corea songs – “Señorita,” “Joban Dna Nopia,” “Children’s Song # 6” and “The Enchantment” – and six Fleck compositions – “Spectacle,” “Mountain,” “A Strange Romance,” “Waltse for Abby,” “Menagerie” and “Sunset Road” – as well as a striking cover of the Ary Barroso-Sidney Russell tune, “Brazil.” Delivered with a chamber-music feel, the songs dance and romance, affect and move.

On *The Enchantment*, Corea and Fleck converse with joy and grace as if they’ve been longtime collaborators. They lead and follow as well as spur each other on. They buoy and muse. Unlike many duo projects where each musician takes extended solo excursions, here the pianist and banjoist play as one, joining together on joyrides through the songs.

Regarding the piano-banjo blend, Corea says, “Béla brought in a couple of odd-time signatures that I’m not used to that I had to really slow down and work out. Also, the style of it – the bluegrass tendency – sometimes I had to work out.”

Corea notes that they had to find common ground for dealing with the timbres of their instruments: “The piano and banjo have two very distinct sounds, but they’re very close to one another. Somehow sometimes the way Béla plays and the notes he chooses, especially in the high ranges, sound pianistic to me. I don’t know if I’ve gotten the piano to sound like a banjo yet, but it’s an interesting combination. It’s unique.”

"I found Chick to be an incredible duo partner," says Fleck. "He pretty much plays something amazing every time he sits down at the piano. So I had to not allow myself to feel intimidated until afterwards. But I love what we did. It was amazing to wake up each day and go to the studio and figure out how to make a song work in this format."

Featuring the most distinctively captivating playing of the year, *The Enchantment* will be released by Concord Records on May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2007.

Track listing:

1. "Señorita" (5:20) - written by Chick Corea
2. "Spectacle" (4:40) - written by Béla Fleck
3. "Joban Dna Nopia" (6:28) - written by Chick Corea
4. "Mountain" (3:53) - written by Béla Fleck
5. "Children's Song #6" (4:02) - written by Chick Corea
6. "A Strange Romance" (4:46) - written by Béla Fleck
7. "Menagerie" (5:53) - written by Béla Fleck
8. "Waltze for Abby" (3:02) - written by Béla Fleck
9. "Brazil" (5:58) - written by Ary Barroso & Sidney Russell
10. "The Enchantment" (5:39) - written by Chick Corea
11. "Sunset Road" (4:36) - written by Béla Fleck

