



**CHARLIE HADEN**

**JIM HALL**

1. **BEMSHA SWING** 8:33  
(Thelonious Monk - Denzil Best)  
Second Floor Music / BMI
2. **FIRST SONG** 8:53  
(Charlie Haden)  
Liberation Music Co. / BMI
3. **TURNAROUND** 9:32  
(Ornette Coleman)  
Songs of Concord / ASCAP
4. **BODY AND SOUL** 11:14  
(Johnny Green - Edward Heyman - Robert Sour)  
Druropetal Music / ASCAP
5. **DOWN FROM ANTIGUA** 12:04  
(Jim Hall)  
Janhall Music / BMI
6. **SKYLARK** 9:23  
(Hoagy Carmichael - Johnny Mercer)  
Songs of Peer LTD / ASCAP
7. **BIG BLUES** 9:19  
(Jim Hall)  
Janhall Music / BMI
8. **IN THE MOMENT** 7:05  
(Charlie Haden)  
Liberation Music Co. / BMI

“What a treat it is to hear two of my heroes and my two favorite personal duet partners playing in a setting like this! This is a recording for the ages.”

Pat Metheny  
March 22rd, 2014



**T**his album documents a rarified journey. **Charlie Haden** and **Jim Hall** knew each for over a half century, played more than a few concerts together, and shared many ideals, but this is their first concert-length recording. It is a major addition to the discography of both artists.

The origins of this duo go all the way back to chamber music-style cool jazz of the mid-50s, when Hall was not just an important voice in celebrated editions of the **Chico Hamilton Quintet** and the **Jimmy Giuffre Trio** but also recording classic discs with diverse voices **Hampton Hawes**, **John Lewis**, and **Paul Desmond**.

At the end of that decade, Haden (seven years younger than **Hall**) turned the world upside down with young avant-gardists **Paul Bley** and **Ornette Coleman**.

Much of that music started in Los Angeles, but Haden and Hall actually first met in New York hotel lobby. The year was 1959, and the Coleman Quartet and Hall

were all staying at the Van Rensselaer Hotel: 15 E. 11th Street at 5th avenue.

Neither was pushing to be a leader yet, but a decade later that began to change. In 1969 Hall released “**Nice to Be With You**”, a charming standards trio date that would serve as a respectable model for almost all of his future work. The same year **Haden** joined forces with **Carla Bley** to make the politically aware **Liberation Music Orchestra**.

Perhaps the two men did not seem logical collaborators just at that moment, but other factors were already suggesting connections. Besides being the most tasteful and swinging guitarist of his generation, Hall was interested in modern classical music: a notable example was the **Gunther Schuller** date “**Abstractions**” with **Ornette Coleman** that also included **Schuller’s “Piece for Guitar and Strings”** with Hall as soloist. And far from being only an “out” player, Haden had shown himself just as happy to play with traditionalists **Henry “Red” Allen** and **Pee Wee Russell**.

While Haden and Hall recorded together on a couple of **Ornette Coleman** curios with vocalist **Webster Armstrong** in 1972, those tracks are a red herring when considering their future collaboration. More telling are the long sequence of duos both men began recording in the 70's.

Perhaps inspired by previous successes in an intimate situation with **Bill Evans**, Hall began a canonical relationship with **Ron Carter**. Later duo partners included **Bob Brookmeyer**, **Red Mitchell** and **George Shearing**, not to mention a whole album *Jim Hall & Bases* (Haden is on two tracks).

**Haden's** first three albums as a leader after the **Liberation Music Orchestra** were duos; mostly with avant-gardists like **Coleman**, **Shepp**, **Don Cherry**, **Alice Coltrane**, **Paul Motian**, and **Keith Jarrett**. But Haden also included **Hampton Hawes** in the mix, with the full-length **Haden-Hawes *As Long As There's Music*** being exceptionally tender. This was the first overt connection Haden made to 50's *West*

*Coast Jazz*, a lifelong love brought out much further in the long-term working band **Quartet West**. (**Hampton Hawes** was also the leader of one of **Hall's** first albums, ***All Night Session***.)

Later Haden duos ran the gamut from **Egberto Gismonti** to **Hank Jones**; perhaps even more relevant were extensive relationships with **Bill Frisell** and **Pat Metheny**, guitarists who have always fervently declared their debt to Jim Hall.

Considering all these connections, a **Haden** and **Hall** duo was inevitable.

Haden doesn't remember if this 1990 performance was precisely the first time they played duo, but at least it was one of the earliest. Both musicians are in top form, clearly inspired by the potential in this new/old relationship. On the surface, it is a quiet set - both loved to play very soft - but for those that can really hear, it is vibrant and intoxicating.

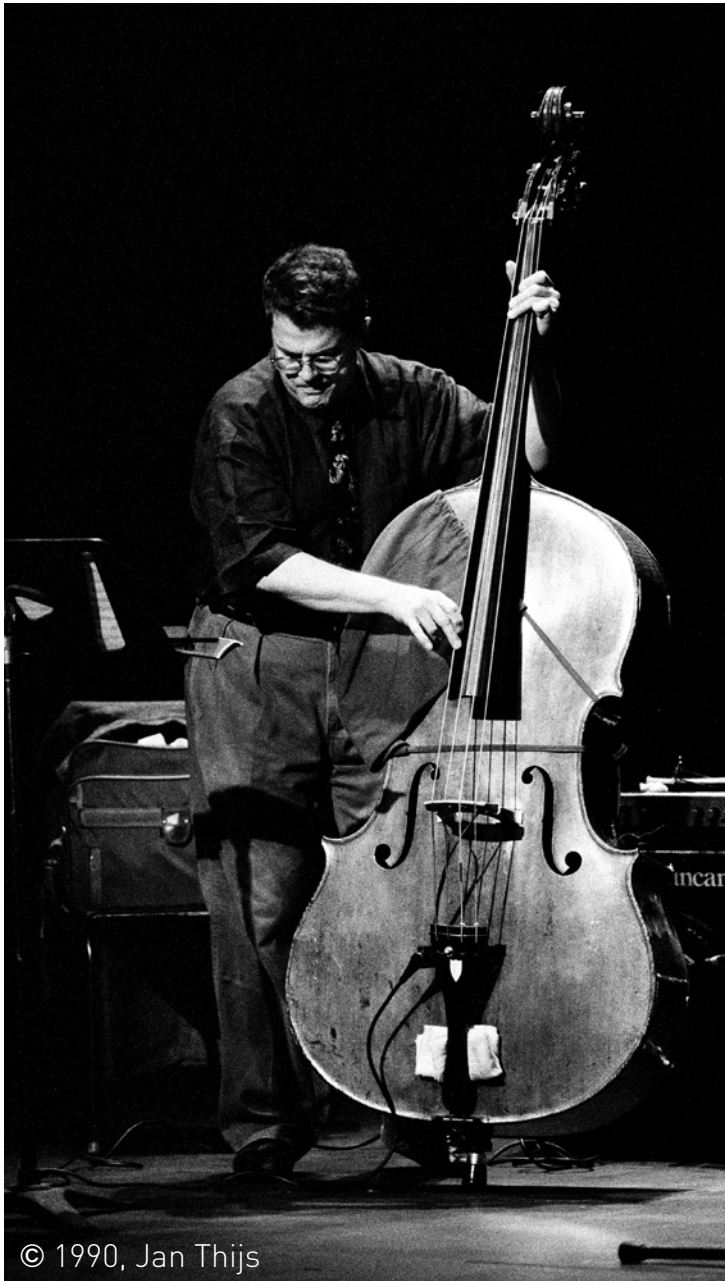
**“Bemsha Swing”** Right around the time of this session Haden tracked **“Bemsha Swing”** with **Don Cherry** on **Art Deco** and Hall did likewise on his own **All Across the City**. Neither man is thought of as a diehard Monkian, though, and this opening gambit takes the form of a tentative prelude as the session warms up. There’s a lot of space, a lot of listening, a lot of consideration. Perhaps the same piece would go more smoothly when played by the “bebop harmonic substitutions” world of Hall with **Ron Carter** or the “bluegrass and free music” world of Haden with **Bill Frisell**. This new marriage has to reach deep in order to find common ground. It’s there, of course, but it takes a moment to land.

**“First Song”** Haden wrote this for **Ruth Cameron**, his wife and major support since the mid-eighties. **“First Song”** has a kind of minor-key “classical” feel just perfect for guitar, and Hall brings wonderful warmth to the melody and improvisation. The session clicks, and everything else from this point on just rolls. Haden says,

“*Jim got an amazing sound out of the the guitar. It didn’t sound like anybody else, it was just him. It was beautiful to play with.*”

**Hall** comps gently for Haden’s passionate solo. During both the guitar and bass improvisations, Haden loves to play the prettiest dissonant notes he can find, resolving them as late as possible, maybe not resolving them at all. Hall’s normal bassists like **Ron Carter**, **Red Mitchell**, and **Don Thompson** possess a different and usually more conventional approach. Haden invented a whole new way to deliver independent bass counterpoint connected just as much to **Bach** as traditional jazz.

**“Turnaround”** All that **Bach** in the bass part wouldn’t mean very much if Haden’s beat didn’t feel right, though. It’s time for the first blues, and, wow, do both these cats swing!



© 1990, Jan Thijs

Jim Hall's flexibility in phrasing is legendary. The guitar can be a stiff master, but Hall always got it to bend and sway. It's impossible to predict what corner his elegant melodies will come from, or what turns those songs might make mid-flight.

Hall is aided in his explorations by the famous **Ornette** head, which moves through keys in an unpredictable fashion. Haden's use of purely melodic notes also encourages Hall to go further afield than usual. One can really hear where **Metheny** and **Frisell** come from in this pan-tonal blues guitar playing.

**"Body and Soul"** Haden takes the lead here, starting off with a rapturous improvisation. He's seldom described as a virtuoso, but an extraordinary relationship to the instrument is required in order to play like this. Haden himself thinks that this CD has some of his most fluid playing on record.

When Hall improvises, he seems to quote the motivic leaps from **Coleman Hawkins's** first iconic recording, causing one to wonder afresh at the limitless potential of this old standard. Composer **Johnny Green** surely couldn't have imagined the future of his tune when he penned in 1930!

**"Body and Soul"** seems to be one of those ballads that requires a cadenza, and Hall gives us a beauty, wrapping up a perfect performance.

**"Down From Antigua"** Hall's latin-waltz seems to come straight from the open strings of the guitar. Haden plays the melody and improvises, after which Hall is left by himself to explore increasingly dissonant chords. At one point it gets quite hairy and experimental, like a flamenco strum gone awry.

Hall works with his volume pedal to change tone; fortunately, this wasn't the night it went wrong. Haden relates: "Once on tour, Jim pressed a foot pedal onstage and it blew up, filling the hall with smoke. Jim told

me to reassure the audience by telling jokes while he worked on fixing it. I told jokes for quite a long time that night!"

**"Skylark"** Another canonical ballad gets a beautiful rendition. Hall played this one a lot but it was less of a Haden staple. On the other hand, Haden reminds us, "I knew almost every standard there was when I got to LA. Jazz and vocalists were all I listened to in the Ozarks, and I made sure to learn every tune I could before I moved west."

It's very hard for a guitarist to fill out the harmony of a complex jazz ballad in a satisfying way. Hall has long been considered one of the greatest at this task, and fellow professionals will probably wish for accompanying video, wanting to see how he manages to move his hands from one awkward position to another so smoothly. Of these tracks, **"Skylark"** is the most purely from the classic Jim Hall aesthetic, although Haden's superb beat and lyrical solo certainly contribute to the magic.

**“Big Blues”** Hall’s riff is straightforward enough on the surface. Haden is inspired to muss up the edges a bit, though, like the mysterious low chromatic walking that gives the illusion of staying in one place behind Hall’s solo. Even wilder is the chordal section where Haden places every conceivable “wrong” note or pedal point against Hall’s grooving blues progression. It’s a wonderful ride.

**“In the Moment”** Haden’s short gateway for free improvisation was first written for **Quartet West**, something fierce to balance that group’s emphasis on melody both pretty and noir. Later **“In the Moment”** would also inspire the most abstract performances on several straight-ahead sessions, perhaps most notably on a sensationally tough trio session with **Joe Henderson** and **Al Foster** also recorded at the Montreal Festival.

On this version, Haden doesn’t let up. At one point, Hall sounds like he’s ready to play the melody and finish, but Haden responds by taking up his bow and taking

it even further into avant-garde territory. Hall can’t be fazed, though, so he goes for some outer-space chordal exploration himself. Eventually the two jazzers sound like a soundtrack to a science fiction movie. After Hall brings it home with some blues, the duo closes up shop and the audience roars.

It’s very satisfying to listen to music made with such an ideal combination of care and freedom. It is also, sadly, a memorial to Hall, who died last year after giving so much pleasure to guitar fans for so many years. Haden offers the correct epitaph: “We were having fun, but also it was so spiritual and so deep.”

**Ethan Iverson**

April 7th 2014



*“We were having fun, but also it was so spiritual and so deep.”*

"I would like to thank Jim Hall for his lovely playing. It was always a pleasure to improvise with him.

I would like to also thank Jane Hall, Devra Hall Levy and my wonderful wife Ruth Cameron for being such supportive families.

I would further like to thank Jean-Philippe Allard, Farida Bachir, Jay Newland and Fred Ansis for the wonderful years of collaboration and thanks to André Ménard, CBC/Radio Canada and Ethan Iverson for each being a part of this project."

**Charlie Haden**, L.A. 2014

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**CHARLIE HADEN** BASS

**JIM HALL** GUITAR