

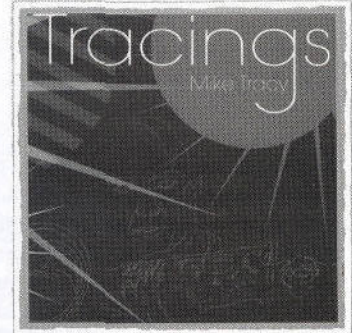


## Frank Bongiorno



### PATHS

**Tom Christensen, saxophone**  
Playscape Recordings  
(PSR#J111601)



### TRACINGS

**Michael Tracy, saxophone**  
Sea Breeze Jazz (SB-3062)

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**M**ichael Tracy, saxophones and percussion; Renato Vasconcellos, keyboards, percussion; Tyrone Wheeler, acoustic/electric bass; Terry O'Mahoney, drums, percussion; Steve Allee, piano (1); Erivelton Silva, drums (4); Pat Lentz, guitar (2, 3); Kathy Jordon, vocal (3); Greg Byrne, percussion (2, 3)

Michael Tracy is currently Professor of Music and Jazz at the University of Louisville School of Music in Louisville, Kentucky where he teaches saxophone and is Director of the Jamey Aebersold Jazz Studies Program. In addition to his position at the University of Louisville, Mr. Tracy has been a member of the renowned Jamey Aebersold Summer Jazz Clinic staff for more than twenty-eight years and has performed professionally throughout the United States and abroad as a soloist and sideman for such artists as Ella Fitzgerald, Buddy Rich, J.J. Johnson, Johnny Mathis, Marvin Hamlisch, the Four Tops and the Temptations. He holds Bachelor's of Music and Music Education degrees as well as the Master's of Arts in Higher Education degree from the University of Louisville and has studied with nationally prominent jazz musicians such as Jamey Aebersold, David Liebman, Jerry Coker and David Baker.

*Tracings* is his second CD as a solo artist, and features original compositions by some of the band members as well as Brazilian standards and arrangements influenced by Tracy's trips to Brazil and subsequently, his musical association with Brazilian pianist, Renato Vasconcellos.

The first cut on the CD, *August 5*, written by Vasconcellos, immediately sets the mood for the remainder of the CD with its driving beat and its lively Latin American rhythmic feel. Alternating between a Mambo feel and an up-tempo swing, an intricate melody is played in unison by the tenor saxophone and

piano before solos ensue. Tracy provides a solo that floats above the ensemble in Getz-like fashion while the rhythm section provides the rhythmic and harmonic foundation to drive the piece.

The next two cuts on the CD, *Melancia* and *Vera Cruz*, lean toward a more contemporary Latin feel with *Melancia* having a funky groove and *Vera Cruz* employing a baião beat. Tracy successfully provides an overall lighter approach and sound for these particular grooves with his use of the soprano saxophone on both of these tunes. However, while his sound is light and continues to project a floating feel over the ensemble, his tone quality remains rich and full on the soprano saxophone throughout the range of the instrument.

*September 15* is also written by Vasconcellos and is dedicated to the memory of introspective jazz pianist Bill Evans who died on this day. The mood portrayed by Tracy and the group during ensemble passages, as well as the individual solos by each musician, is somewhat relaxed but joyful, and with the right amount of reverence in homage of the fallen pianist.

A CD of music from Brazil is not complete without the music of Antonio Carlos Jobim. Tracy has chosen two of Jobim's pieces, *Favela* (translated from Brazilian as ghetto), and the classic standard, *Once I Loved*. With the addition of percussionist drummer Erivelton Silva for both of these compositions, the rhythm section provides an energetic backdrop for the soloists without interfering or distracting the listener away from the soloists. While each soloist offers a fine solo on *Favela*, of particular note is Wheeler's electric bass solo with its rhythmic intensity and melodic drive that seems to anchor the performance as well as make for a nice transition from the piano solo to the tenor saxophone/percussion solos. With the addition of some arranged rhythmic and harmonic kicks in the beginning of *Once I Loved*, soloists have no trouble maintaining the melodic nature of the piece while playing with and across the rhythms of the ensemble.

*Balaio*, also written by a well-known Brazilian composer, Hermento Pascoal, is played with a relaxed baião feel. The slightly out-of-sinc rhythmic feel produced by the baião feel gives the piece a different type of Brazilian flavor, but also gives the soloists additional material to develop their melodic improvisations with some rhythmic twists and turns.

The title cut of the CD, *Tracings*, written by pianist Steve Allee, is the only excursion from the Brazilian mainstream, as it is played with a lilting waltz feel. More so than some of the other pieces on the CD, the ensemble is given the opportunity to express as many colors as possible on each instrument because of the lush sounds produced by the melody and harmony, and perhaps, to a certain extent, the less intricate, precise rhythmic feel afforded this piece compared to the Brazilian music.

The music on this CD is authentic and true to the spirit of modern Brazilian music. Tracy and the supporting musicians perform with a true confidence and conviction for the music, and it is certainly portrayed in the music and the sounds of this CD. §