

# MESTIZX

*Liner Notes by Ibelisse Guardia Ferragutti & Frank Rosaly*

We have been entangled with the multiform languages of our ancestors for as long as we can remember, consciously and unconsciously. We have both been touched by a fascination of sound and the act of listening to our surroundings, community and fabric of our realities, weaving deep sorrow, celebration, trance, grief and resistance in song... and in us.

“Being born and raised in the very outspoken territories of Bolivia and Brazil, I was in constant confrontation of these languages. I remember endless family gatherings, sharing time together making music. In Bolivia, we often shared nostalgic songs that touched the lives of my dad – howling, banging on his guitar – mom and extended family. In Brazil as well: my grandfather Pedro Ferragutti, a fanfare composer and saxophonist, would sit us down and have us listen to numerous dance and song forms. I recall the tornado of emotions listening to this music, which were like letters from the souls of my lineage from both the Bolivian and Brazilian diasporas. Through those songs, they were teaching me who they were, and who we were. That’s how I fell deeply in love with protest, Latin, Andean, and Brazilian music, and more generally, the sounds of the Southern hemisphere. Coming from deeply rooted musical families in both lands, listening and singing together to Violeta Parra, Victor Jara, Chico Buarque, Gal Costa, Inti Illimani and others was, in many ways, my education. It would define my life path of choosing to pursue art for a living. I didn’t quite grasp the impact of these spacious and timeless listening moments I shared with my family until much later.” - Ibelisse

“Being a first generation Puerto Rican-American, my parents tried their best to integrate me while also attempting to keep me in touch with our roots. I had a kind of secondary contact with this ancestral language, but was finding my ancestry in the magical surroundings of the desert through my imagination. I saw a rare Tito Puente performance in Arizona when I was very young. That moment was thunder, heating my chest and limbs. I knew that this storm passing through my small body was absolutely the feeling, the opening and the sound. I wanted to pursue music for the rest of my life. The sheer power of that moment became the red thread, propelling me through my practice of listening, playing percussion and composing. I have started connecting the dots on how my alignment with jazz and improvised music – particularly during my 15 years performing in Chicago – has been an extremely important bridge throughout the years to a broader view in relation to my roots. Growing up in Arizona, discouraged to learn Spanish or identify as Puerto Rican, kept me at a distance from those territories. Yet my own ‘discovery’ of bomba, plena, jibaro into son, salsa, music of Yoruba and other Afro-Cubano lineages, and since 2008, pre-colonial Indigenous Taino studies, has precipitated in teaching me the silent songs of those who have inhabited these ancestral territories.” - Frank

We are both now based in Amsterdam. It's a place that has embraced our experimental practices in music, performance and a diversity of projects. We also fell in love with each other here on September 18th 2014, during a concert Frank was playing at the renowned Jazz venue, Bimhuis. We interpret the oracular spark of this magnanimous love as an act of surrender and total belief. Frank was living in Chicago at the time, and Ibelisse was already based in Amsterdam - and yet there was no way around it, we delved into the storm of migrating continents to sing life together. The love spark between us multiplied our already deep amour for the music that exists in the fabric of our Latin roots.

We are aligned by what we've studied within the art practices of jazz, rock, punk, performance art, theater and dance, and share a hunger to relate our own artistic practices and study of our ancestries to the Western styles and ideals that surround us. This calibration made our collaboration both natural and magnetic.

We then began traveling together to our root territories. In addition to spending countless nights singing and sharing with our families, we noticed other songs – the songs of the land itself. While sitting between the intertwined roots of the Figueira Gigante tree in Ilha Grande, we became acquainted with jungle birds like gavião-carcarás, sanhaços, socós, atobás, tesourão, joão-de-barros, tangará and the beija-flor. While walking for days between cachoeiras and small canyons in Chapada Diamantina we met the birds of this cosmic landscape such as gravatinha, rabo-mole-da-serra, tangará-príncipe and aracuã-de-barriga-branca.

Throughout astonishing pitch-black nights we heard the concerts of the miniature frog Coquí singing together with the most mesmerizing and enchanting insect cacophony and choir of escarabajos, mantis y gorgojos in Playa la Selva, Puerto Rico. We spent long sunny afternoons in Ibelisse's grandparents' gardens and met local birds el picaflor, el hornero, el halcón in Cochabamba, Bolivia. We danced in Puerto Rico among winding vines in El Yunque, listening to the rain fall on the countless leaves and surfaces whose music created a perfect trance.

This record is a document we made as a love letter to our ancestors, both from the past, present and future, while recognizing through ritual and ceremony the inherent colonial presence. Mestizx is a common title used in the territories of the diasporas we belong to, to differentiate people that are from a mixed race descent. It is used in a slightly different way in every place, but generally highlights a separation of lineages from which we descend. This divisive worldview has paved a paradoxical state of being for us regarding what songs we are allowed to associate with.

“I adore, admire and celebrate Andean music, but am ever aware that it is tricky business to try to participate in ritual, music and dance amongst the communities of that territory, despite being born in Bolivia. I am

mestiza, so no matter how much love I have for the cosmological, ecological and mind-blowing practices, the nature of the other (colonial) half of my lineage carries separation.” - Ibelisse

“To natives of Puerto Rico, I will always be experienced as an outsider, so making the attempt for an intimately shared experience from my Puerto Rican heritage will always be one stemming from some degree of alienation. But as a mestizo, it doesn’t hinder me from reaching towards the deep roots I feel within, so I choose to liberate the music within.” - Frank

We felt a shared kinship and grief in this estrangement, worthy of addressing. We experience our ancestral homes as intrinsically distant, and share an urgency to connect deeper with our ancestral lineage. Through our talks, travels and this shared longing, both a nostalgia and a healing process were ignited within us. This commenced a deep journey to grasp the historical reasons on why these separations are so loud. This process continues to be a painful one, so we began to absorb practices, readings and a multiplicity of teachings to align in love and listening to our histories. While knowing we are opening a past, present and future can of worms - we became aware this was an indispensable step to be made.

Corrupted histories, written by the same hands that created the separation in the first place, became our focus. We ventured into painful cracks. We spent time with historians, activists and healers who write from a place of resistance and stand in the dangerous trenches of truth. We armored up to listen within our own mestizx bodies, hearing what these cracks had to tell us. We listened... and listened. What we heard is this: for the last 500 years, most of the voices of our ancestors, their belief systems, cosmologies, ecologies, resources, territories and bodies have been made invisible. Silenced. Forcibly migrated & enslaved. Oppressed. Erased. Built over. Destroyed.

However, our ancestors are still whispering through those alleged erasures. There is an echo no one will ever be able to silence, a thread to grasp. That helped us realize that it is not us that don’t belong, rather, it’s the vast colonial project of multifaceted oppression that has made us believe such a lie. We were not imagining the alienation that was being imposed upon us based on the attempted uprootedness which we felt. So we sang, we played and above all we created silence to listen to those humming voices that are giving us the permission to sing and play, speculating upon sonic imaginaries and entering trance-like states in order to harvest what they tell us.

We are un-weaving conditionings, disassembling and reweaving the artifacts that remain into the songs that are now manifested in this record. We recognize that these are more than songs to us, they are threads that echo timelines that have been made nearly invisible. We know that there is resonance in the darkness of those

cracks. There is resistance. There is Love. There are still innumerable unfolded crevices and fissures filled with untold stories. We also learned that we don't have to dig up all of the past, we simply have to make ourselves available to our ancestors so that they can sing through us.

We would like to acknowledge the mountains, the jungles, the plants, the animals and the people that have guided us to practice courage while listening, may they be amongst the living or in the almas realm: Cordillera de los Andes, the Amazon, Pajchiri, Lago Corani, El Yunque, The Mogollon Rim, Balneario Seven Seas, Ilha Grande, Chapada Diamantina, the Atlantic and Caribbean Sea and all ecosystems that inhabit these territories. We acknowledge sound practitioners Violeta Parra, Tito Puente, Victor Jara, Billy Higgins, Canario, Kantus de Charazani, the Afro-Bolivian community, Andean Ayllus, Elvira Espejo, the Taíno Indigenous community, Phujllay from Tarabuco, the Sirinus. We acknowledge the writers, activists, historians, theorists, ethnomusicologists and healers Guaman Poma Ayala, Arnaud Gérard, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, Bayo Akomolafe, Qhana Wara and Yawar Mallku.

We would like to pay our gratitude and utmost admiration to International Anthem Recording Company, Scottie McNiece, Dave Vettrano, David Allen, Alejandro Ayala for the gift of making this document. Thank you to our community of friends, family, contemporaries and music makers for supporting us, believing in us and giving us your sonic, imagery and pluri-formal gifts: Chris Doyle, Ben LaMar Gay, Rob Frye, Mikel Patrick Avery, Bill MacKay, Daniel Villarreal, Avreeayl Ra, Guilherme Granado, Fredy Velásquez, Viktor Le Givens.

Grandparents, Ancestors, this music is for you. We love you.