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Holly Cooper | [www.mouthpiecemusic.com](http://www.mouthpiecemusic.com)  
(310) 993-4017 | [holly@mouthpiecemusic.com](mailto:holly@mouthpiecemusic.com)

## **COMPOSER/ARRANGER DAVE SLONAKER RELEASES** **FOLLOW-UP TO HIS GRAMMY-NOMINATED DEBUT** **CONVERGENCY**

Available August 19, 2022 on Origin Records

Composer and arranger **DAVE SLONAKER** believes that we are in a new Golden Age for big bands, and considering the success of his debut recording, *Intrada* (2013), he is probably right. Not only was the album nominated for a Grammy for Best Large Jazz Ensemble Album, *Intrada* also received stellar reviews. Jack Bowers of *All About Jazz* said, “Slonaker’s music is contemporary in the best sense of the word, harmonically sophisticated yet always accessible thanks to an unswerving reliance on time-honored melodies and rhythms. In other words, this is big band jazz that quickens the pulse, swings hard and enhances the tradition.”

Now, on his newest release, **CONVERGENCY**, Slonaker takes all the elements that made *Intrada* so successful and expands upon them. The title of the album reflects his concept. Rather than writing standard big band charts, Slonaker set out to create a large ensemble where each of the remarkable musicians has an opportunity to express their own unique talent, creating a convergence of all the different elements of the ensemble into a unified whole. Slonaker explains, “I love the tonal colors of a large jazz ensemble, and that includes the different colors that band members paint with their solos. When I compose and arrange, I like to create a canvas that allows diverse musicians to express themselves with their own, individual voice.”

The musicians on **CONVERGENCY** are a Who’s Who of top Southern California players. Slonaker has known several of them for 30 to 40 years. They include trumpet/flugelhorn section comprising **WAYNE BERGERON**, **DAN FORNERO**, **RYAN DEWEESE**, **CLAY JENKINS**, and **RON STOUT**; trombonists **ALEX ILES**, **CHARLIE MORILLAS**, **IDO MESHULAM**, and **BILL REICHENBACH** (bass trombone, tuba); saxophonists **BOB SHEPPARD**, **BRIAN SCANLON**, **ROB LOCKART**, **TOM LUER**, **ADAM SCHROEDER**, and **JAY MASON**. The rhythm section comprises **LARRY KOONSE** (electric guitar), **ED CZACH** (piano), **EDWIN LIVINGSTON** (bass), **PETER ERSKINE** (drums), and **BRIAN KILGORE** (percussion).

Slonaker has worked in Hollywood for over thirty years and is highly regarded as one of the top arrangers and orchestrators in film and television. His credits are extensive, including such blockbusters as *Spiderman*, *Men in Black*, *Alice in Wonderland* and *Air Force One*, among many others. In television, his work can be heard on a couple of different *Star Trek* series, *JAG*, and *Murder She Wrote*, to name just a few. Although working in film and television has its rewards, as a composer and arranger with unique concepts, Slonaker has a compelling need to express himself through his own compositions.

Slonaker wrote and arranged 10 of the 11 compositions on **CONVERGENCY**. A big part of the job as a Hollywood arranger and orchestrator is to assimilate and duplicate different styles as needed, and all those disparate styles can be heard on this recording. “I’m like a sponge that has absorbed a wide range of influences, from the Jazz Messenger groups and Blue Note recordings of the late 50’s, 60’s, and 70’s to Thad Jones and Bob Brookmeyer to the Yellowjackets and Pat Metheny, but one of the greatest influences on my writing and arranging is undoubtedly Bill Holman,” says Slonaker.

Slonaker opens the album with the title tune, “Convergency.” A longtime fan of *Concerto for Orchestra* by Béla Bartók, Slonaker wrote the piece as a mini-concerto for big band featuring different sections and textures as building blocks to a swinging finale. “A Curve in the Road” is built on a four-note motive with a curve in its melodic shape. It first appears melodically in the antiphonal pile-ons of the ensemble at the beginning but is rhythmically foreshadowed by the drums in the first two bars.

Slonaker was inspired to write “A Gathering Circle” after visiting a Native American village museum. He came upon a clearing called “the gathering circle,” which was a meeting place for the members of the village. During our politically polarizing times, the idea of a village coming together resonated with him. “Duelity” was commissioned by Miles Osland and Vince DiMartino for the University of Kentucky Jazz Ensemble and premiered at the Midwest Band Clinic in Chicago in 2018. The composition features Bob Sheppard on alto sax and Ron Stout on trumpet weaving in and out of the melody in a friendly, swinging duel. “Inner Voices” is a meditation on a question that philosophers and theologians have often wrestled with: What are the inner voices that guide our choices as we face the challenges of life?

As a young trombonist, Slonaker was a big fan of the Jazz Crusaders which featured a front line of trombone and tenor sax. In “Sometimes A Notion” he uses that sound along with acoustic bass in the melody with a stop time refrain. Slonaker wrote “And Now the News” as a highlight for the trombone section featuring Alex Iles, Charlie Morillas, Ido Meshulam and Bill Reichenbach. “Vanishing Point” grew out of simple original tunes he used to sing to his son as a baby to help him sleep. Slonaker considers it a pandemic lullaby, reflective and disconsolate, but also with comfort and hope as we continue to deal with the pandemic.

Slonaker thinks “I Had the Craziest Dream,” composed by Harry Warren and Mack Gordon, is one of the great love songs. It is one of the first songs he learned when he studied jazz piano in high school and has remained with him all these years. As Slonaker says, “You never know where your youthful dreams might lead you.”

The compositions on **CONVERGENCY** in some way reflect a life journey, which Slonaker explores within the tradition but also with all the possibilities his large jazz ensemble offers. When musicians come together as a group, each of their own life stories intersect, merge, and converge in ways that give meaning to the music.

#### **ABOUT DAVE SLONAKER**

Slonaker grew up in Pittsburgh, PA. When he was young, he studied piano and trombone on a hand-me-down instrument given to him by his father. He earned a Bachelor of Music Degree in Trombone and Composition at Indiana University, had advanced graduate study in composition at the University of Pennsylvania, and received a masters’ degree from Eastman School of Music. His teachers included Rayburn Wright, Manny Album, David Baker, Bill Dobbins, John Eaton, and George Crumb.

Believing that passing the craft of composing and arranging to a new generation is important, Slonaker has taught or given master classes at USC, Eastman School of Music, the ASCAP Television & Film Scoring Workshop, the American Society of Music Arrangers and Composers (ASMAC), and the Los Angeles Ravel Orchestral Study Group.

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**CONVERGENCY** will be released August 19, 2022 on Origin Records and will be available everywhere.

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